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## A Pilgrimage of Adventure\*

A REALISTIC STORY OF PRESENT-DAY AMERICAN LIFE

By Sam Hellman

THE walls undulated, the ceiling took on a wavy motion; then the floor rose unsteadily, and Henry Trent slipped heavily through a dark mist to meet it. Calmly the girl laid aside her notebook and pencil, and bent over him. Without any great effort she turned his slender body on its back, and methodically she went about opening his collar and loosening his shirt-front.

A sprinkle of cold water brought movement to the pale lips. A protesting sigh, and the eyes opened. They met the girl's cool gaze with a wan attempt at a smile. With the help of a table leg, Trent lifted himself on an elbow.

"Ah, yes!" he said lightly. "Pardon the interruption. Where were we?"

"You fainted," returned the stenographer. "I knew you would. Let me help you up."

Leaning back in the swivel chair to which he had been assisted, Trent laughed.

"Amusing, wasn't it?"

"Amusing?"

"Why, yes, Miss Hale. Don't you see the high humor of it? Here I am dictating a philosophical thesis designed to remake human thought, to scatter the dishonored ashes of Zeno and Plato to the four winds, to whip the blatant sophistries of Kant and Spinoza into oblivion, when *psuff*—a ribald laugh sounds, and I go into oblivion myself."

The girl looked at him, puzzled.

"Are you quite yourself, Mr. Trent?"

"Quite. Let us proceed. What was the last?"

The stenographer turned dubiously to her notes.

"You had just finished that paragraph about Marcus Aurelius. The next one begins: 'The sense of humor is—' That's as far as you got."

"I see," said Trent slowly. "The sense of humor is—well, the sentence could end

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right there. It points out a more vital truth than the 'I am because I exist' silly-ism. Without the sense of humor—"

"Are you dictating or conversing?" queried the girl.

"Both," was the reply. "That's why I like to have you with me. When I am dictating to you I feel that I am holding a conversation with one who understands and—shall I say it?—sympathizes."

"To an extent," returned Miss Hale. "Frankly, I believe you attach too much importance to what you call the sense of humor. As far as we have gone with this thesis, one would get the impression that the ability to laugh was the only thing in life worth while. As a matter of fact, existence is a serious affair."

"Granted," nodded Trent; "yet what profiteth it to add straws to the sagging back of the camel? Life is indeed a dull, heavy repast, made up of viands that would be tasteless and indigestible without the proper sauce—the sense of humor. Do you understand?"

"In a way. Yet," Miss Hale went on, "I should say that the power of thinking clearly and serenely would conduce to real contentment more effectively than your sense of humor; and isn't contentment, after all, the aim of existence?"

"I am afraid," was the answer, "that we are talking at cross purposes. Perhaps I have not as yet made myself clear in the thesis, but when I speak of the sense of humor I do not mean native quickness to see a joke, for example. Laughter is a crude manifestation of humor—indeed, the crudest. That vague term 'the sense of proportion' may give you an idea of my conception. Poise, lucid thinking, and mental fearlessness are among the things that the true sense of humor embraces. My ideal man would be unafraid, for he would never lose his mental balance. Don't you know that most of us are crushed by admitting the seriousness of situations which are only seemingly serious? A black cloud throws us into such a panic that our confused faculties are unable to grasp the fact that it is but a blustering bag of harmless wind. The power of differentiation is lost. We are excited, and therefore helpless. It is the cool who conquer life, and coolness is the fixed temperature of the sense of humor."

"You overwhelm me," laughed Miss Hale. Her face grew serious. "Do you

know, Mr. Trent, that you are a sick man?"

"Bodily, perhaps I am. Here is an illustration of the point I have been trying to make. Sickness, we will admit, is a serious matter. I so regard it; yet would I be better off, would my illness grow less distressing, were I to regard it gloomily? Rather would I not make my mind the ally of the germs, or whatever it is that is hurting me?"

"Yes, but aren't you abetting the enemy by ignoring him? Is it the part of wisdom, a tenet of the sense of humor, to sneer at a real menace?"

"Am I so ill as that? I have come to look upon my weakness as a more or less trifling affair, due to overwork or something of the sort."

"That's just what you are suffering from, Mr. Trent—overwork; but it is far from a trifling affair. When I was with Dr. Hastings I acquired a bit of medical knowledge, you know."

"And how would you diagnose my case?"

"Overexertion," she returned briskly. "Lack of fresh air—insufficient sleep, food, and recreation—too much concentration on one line of thought."

"And the cure?"

"Complete rest, out in the open. Won't you see Dr. Hastings? He's very fond of you."

"He used to be, you mean. I'm afraid he's never forgiven me for taking you away from him. He's likely to prescribe a dose of poison."

The girl laughed.

"What makes you think that? Your sense of humor, your perfect manhood that knows no fear?"

Trent's mouth opened to reply, but the first words died away in a sharp gasp. He fell back with his eyes half closed. Soon they reopened.

"I think," he whispered, "that I'll take your advice."

Holding the edge of the chair, he rose.

"Shall I go with you, Mr. Trent?" asked the girl.

"No—I can manage. You might wait here, though, and hear the verdict of the jury. You may be out of a position when I return," he finished with a smile.

"My sense of humor," retorted the stenographer, "refuses to allow me to worry."



Dr. Hastings's office was in the same building, on the same floor, and but a few steps from Trent's quarters.

"Huh!" grunted the physician. "You finally came, did you?"

"Looking for me, were you?"

"For several months. You've been working yourself to death—no exercise, no sleep, no variation in thought. What did you expect? You've lost about ten pounds in the last two weeks, haven't you?"

"I really can't say," returned Trent. "Scales are part of the inquisition of fear, and—"

The old doctor jerked impatiently at his thick, short beard.

"Don't be an ass, young fellow! Strip and let me look you over—what's left of you."

With stethoscope and fingers Hastings went over the frail frame.

"Well?" asked Trent, after the examination appeared to be over. "What's your guess?"

"Guess!" snorted the doctor. "There's no guess in this case. Put your clothes on. Now," he went on, when that operation had been completed, "listen to me. You're about through. I may be too late, even now. Get out of here, walk over to your office, and put a sign on the door saying that you won't be back for six months, if ever. Then—"

"Then," cut in Trent maliciously, "send Miss Hale up here. You want her back, don't you?"

"I'll take her back," the doctor said curtly. Then, in a gentler tone: "Henry, you mustn't make light of what I have told you. You are badly run down and within an inch of a nervous collapse. Have you had any breakdowns, fainting spells, sinking—"

"One to-day—a little one."

"That's the handwriting, my boy. The next one will be worse, and the third one may send you to the insane asylum or the cemetery, if you're lucky. You've worn your brain and nervous system to a frazzle. I don't believe you weigh more than a hundred and ten pounds. Get on the scales. H-m—a hundred and eight. You ought to weigh a hundred and fifty. Get out of here!"

"Where?"

"Anywhere out in the open. Fish, tramp—do anything, but stay out in the air and the sunshine. Don't read or write.

Give your body some work and your mind a rest."

"Sounds reasonable. I imagine that I have been letting one of them loaf too much. No medicine?"

"I have already prescribed. Will you do as I say?"

"Will you reemploy Miss Hale?"

"Yes, yes," snapped Hastings. "My chances of retaining her are even, anyhow."

"Very well, then, doctor—I'll go."

Miss Hale looked pleased when Trent told her of the verdict and his acceptance of it.

"I wasted my time in Hastings's office," he remarked. "His diagnosis was the same as yours. I'll be back in six months at the latest. You'll return to me then and we'll finish the thesis, eh?"

"If you wish; but stay away until you get well. I'll keep the sense of humor warm for you in the mean time."

"Don't bother," laughed Trent. "I'm taking it along with me."

## II

TRENT was twenty-eight years old. Twelve years before, his father and mother had died within a few weeks—two gentle souls taken with benign suddenness from a world that was too hard and uncouthly practical for them. To the youth, the shift from the home of his parents to the home of his uncle had been but a step from one academic cloister into another.

For two decades the elder Trent had occupied the chair of economics at Walsingham University. Between his study and the class-room had lain the narrow road of his life. There had been no by-paths, no heights, only the rut he had dug for himself. His grasp of the theories of political economy was equaled only by his ignorance of their practical background. He could convict statistics of falsehood only by comparing them with other statistics, just as he could confound one hypothesis of inflation and exchange by opposing it with others. His knowledge of finance was profound, yet a newsboy could have short-changed him with impunity.

His brother, of a more practical turn, had also been an instructor at Walsingham. Classical philosophy had engaged his attention. Now he was chancellor of the institution—a position that required less knowledge of Plato and Aristotle than of polite

mendicancy, the begging of alms from a reluctant Legislature which listed universities under the head of eleemosynary institutions. Yet with all his problems he had found time for kindness to the orphan.

Permeated with the culture about him, young Trent had shot through his college courses like a brilliant comet. At twenty-one he had become an assistant in logic. Seven years later he had risen to a full professorship, despite a certain uneasiness which he had created among his elder colleagues by a laughing lack of reverence for the orthodox—an attitude of mind that was especially puzzling to those who had known his father well.

"Don't you think," mildly suggested Uriah Paxton, professor of higher mathematics, when the question of promotion came up in the faculty council, "that the young man is a little irreverent—rather inclined to set up his own immature judgment against—"

"The fault," interrupted the chancellor gently, "is not with him—it is with youth. His classes are constantly growing, and I am of the belief that he has earned his advancement."

The new dignity was not to go into effect until after Trent's return from the sabbatical year of absence. Instead of devoting his holiday to travel and recreation, he had obstinately chosen to isolate himself in an office with his stenographer—a plain young woman of unusual intellect who had been attending his series of popular lectures on "Pragmatism."

Not until after dinner that evening did the young man speak of the happenings of the day.

"Uncle, I saw Dr. Hastings this afternoon. He says I must go away."

Mild inquiry came into the weary, deep-set eyes of the chancellor. He gazed abstractedly at the thin features and pale cheeks of his nephew.

"He thinks," went on Trent, "that I am in danger of a nervous breakdown if I remain at my work any longer. I had a slight fainting attack to-day."

"You are going away?"

It was more of a comment than an interrogation. The younger man nodded.

"I am glad to hear you say that," returned his uncle. "I have meant to speak to you about that very matter, Henry. You have been looking pale of late, and I have noted that your appetite is far below

normal. You have earned a vacation. You will recall that I urged you not to take up your thesis at this time. Where do you plan to go?"

"I really have given the matter no thought. Perhaps the shore or the mountains, just to lazy around, tramp a little, eat and sleep—complete rest, you know."

"H-m!" muttered the other. "Undeniably that would benefit you a great deal physically, but why not take advantage of leave to adjust your mental perspective? Why not learn something real?"

"Good Heavens, uncle, that's what Hastings says I must avoid—reading and writing, even thinking."

"I agree with him completely," was the rejoinder. "Avoid them, indeed, for a whole year. At the same time I see no reason why you cannot thin out your dense ignorance a bit."

"Ignorance!"

"Yes, ignorance," returned the older man calmly. "What do you know about the only subject that is worth knowing—life? What are you, after all, but a super-educated parrot? What you think you know is not your wisdom, but what experience has taught others, and what has come to you by rote. You are not really a teacher. You are a middleman, selling the produce of others for a commission. You speak of hate and rage and passion in your philosophy lectures," he went on without change of tone; "but you understand the emotions you discuss only within the pitiful limitations of the transmitted word. You are now writing a thesis on the sense of humor, I believe. I gather you are making mock of the great minds of the past. Probably you are laughing at Aristotle, Spinoza, Descartes—men whose wisdom was drained from the lees of suffering, from the dregs of emotional torture. Along you come with half-formed dream theories to demolish the substantial structure of experience. Your philosophy may be correct. Prove it! If what you call the sense of humor is so all-powerful, demonstrate its invincibility. Then men will believe and practise. Your beautiful bridge isn't worth a continental until a train has passed over it safely. Remember, airplanes were drawn on paper for centuries, but men didn't believe that a heavier-than-air machine could fly until one did fly."

Trent started to speak, but his uncle held up a restraining hand.

"I'm not finding fault," went on the chancellor in a gentler tone. "You are not to blame for the circumstances which have tethered you to the book-shelf and the class-room. At twenty-one, when most boys are burning their fingers at the fires of experience, you were teaching logic—the logic of the printed and annotated page. The truly logical mind can only be developed by living, and you haven't lived. You have been a worm grubbing among the so-called humanities, ignoring what is an infinitely more important study—humanity. You have classes in practical philosophy, and you haven't had a practical experience of any importance in your life. Don't feel hurt, Henry. I—"

"Go on, please," said Trent.

"Review the years for a moment. Your father was an instructor here; your mother, the daughter of another instructor. You were suckled among books. When you should have been skinning your knees and breaking windows with baseballs, you were reading Hegel. At sixteen you were deep in collegiate courses, and here you are now, at twenty-eight, with less real knowledge of the problems of existence than a twelve-year-old schoolgirl. Yet you would tell men that pain and worry and fear are non-existent, that a sense of humor nullifies all ills—you, who have never met with the ills you would laugh away! Now you have a vacation forced on you. Make the most of it. Are you content, Henry, merely to see and hear? Don't you want to feel and taste? Are you satisfied to know that there is such a thing as an apple? Don't you want to dig your teeth into one?"

There was a queer wistfulness in the question—a sort of hunger.

"Yes," returned the young man soberly. "I do. For a long time I have vaguely felt a certain incompleteness, a lack of color, an absence of vivid substantiality. I have thought of going away, but something has always prevented me—I am afraid an unduly exalted idea of my importance here. Perhaps—"

"No, no, Henry. You are merely the victim of your environment and training. Between them, they are drowning you in this shallow backwater. I, too—"

"You wouldn't have me give up teaching, would you?"

"No, indeed," was the emphatic response. "I would have you a better teacher, a broad-minded, feeling teacher, not a nar-

row-minded pedant with a vision blurred by the lifeless theories of the dead and the decrepit dogmas of the long departed. Develop new ideas, build a new philosophy, but ground it on a foundation of experience. You have a year. Get out of this stagnant pool. Go where the waters of life run free and high. Bathe in them, suffer in them, exult in them. Learn to cry, learn to laugh. Give your theories a thorough test. Perhaps, after twelve months, you won't want to teach again; perhaps your desire to do so will be intensified. You are so young, Henry—so young!"

There was a spell of silence.

"Uncle," asked Trent, "what would you suggest? What shall I do?"

"Get out among people. Work with them, play with them, fight with them, if necessary. Share their life to the utmost. Don't study them. Be of them."

"You mean to get a place in a factory or a store?"

"Don't ask me, Henry. Use your own initiative. Don't you see how utterly helpless you are?"

A sudden flush came into the youth's thin cheeks. Anger, unbidden, rose in his heart.

"You think I am?"

"Aren't you?" asked the chancellor.

"No, I'm not!" cried Trent. "I'll show you that I'm not!" He rose from the table. "I'm going," he announced curtly.

"Where?"

"Is it material?"

"Calm yourself, Henry. Have you sufficient funds for your trip?"

"I have a little."

"You had better let me—"

"Thanks, uncle," returned Trent; "but I don't imagine that the proper way to find life is to go in search for it with a bag of gold. I am going just as I am, with the few dollars that I have in my pocket. I leave in the morning."

"But where?" persisted his uncle. "Where will you go without money?"

"Where the winds take me," Trent said lightly. "Others have gone without funds—why not I?"

"You assuredly have a destination in mind?"

"I have read," said Henry slowly, "that one may travel on a freight-train for nothing. I—"

"Freight-train!" exclaimed the chancellor. "Where?"

"Where the brakeman wills. Sooner or later. One is always thrown off a freight-train, isn't one?"

## III

LATE morning of the next day found Trent at River Falls, five miles by trolley from the college town. His farewells to his uncle had come to an end abruptly the evening before, with a smiling shrug on the part of the older man. The chancellor breakfasted alone.

Toward noon, walking about the sooty factory streets of River Falls, Trent discovered something that he had lost months before—an appetite. He entered the nearest restaurant, a greasy place with seats along a counter, and, crowded among coatless foreign workmen, disposed of the soggy mess set before him.

A few blocks away was a public square of stunted bush and trampled grass, and thither the traveler directed his steps. His spirits were strangely buoyant. Walsingham seemed as far away as Tibet.

Seating himself on a crazy bench, Trent took financial stock. After paying for his lunch, the five dollars he had brought with him had sunk to four dollars and ten cents. This modest amount, with the contents of the suit-case that rested beside him, represented the total of his material possessions. It was not a great deal to start on a journey with, yet Trent had no intention of remaining at River Falls. The town was too temptingly close to home.

His glance fell on a grotesque figure lying on the grass some distance away—an elongated specimen of the genus hobo as depicted in the comic sections of newspapers. The man's clothing was a motley of patched misfits, the toes of his shoes yawned, and the growth of many, many days splotched his cheeks and chin. Trent walked over and sat beside the wayfarer, who scowled suspiciously.

"I beg your pardon," smiled the young man, "but I am seeking information from what I believe to be a fount of experience. How may one travel by railroad without paying tribute?"

"What t'ell?" growled the tramp, sitting up. "You ain't got nothin' on me."

"I don't understand. Oh, I see! You think that I am connected with the police; but I assure you that I am not. I am trying to get out of this place."

"Buy a ticket," snapped the other.

"That, of course," agreed Trent, "would be the natural way, but unfortunately, or rather fortunately, I haven't the funds. Perhaps you would be good enough to tell me—"

"Where yer wanna go?"

"I have no particular place in mind. In fact, my destination is immaterial. I mean no offense."

The hobo rose, unraveling his ludicrous length, several inches above six feet.

"Got the price of a drink?"

Trent produced a quarter.

"All that I wish to know," he said, "is the *modus operandi*—that is to say, the method of—er—stealing a ride. Can you enlighten me? How, for example, do you move from place to place?"

"I don't getcher, bo," returned the tramp, still suspicious; "but there's lots of ways. You kin try the roof, the rods, the blind baggage, side-door Pullmans—"

"Side-door Pullmans! But I told you I have no money."

"Box car, kid—box car! Know what a box car is, don'tcher?"

"But aren't they always locked?"

"Naw—not the empties. A coal gone-dollar is easiest of all, but," he added with a grin, "it won't do that white collar of yours no good. Say, listen, bo! Are yer kiddin' me, or are yer really tryin' to make a getaway?"

"I'm telling you the truth."

"H-m! Guess y' are," grunted the hobo, looking into the young man's clear, smiling eyes. "Lemme give yer a tip, kid. Yer can't beat yer way with them swell rags and that there keester"—pointing to the suit-case.

"But I have no other clothes."

"Listen, kid! I'll getcher fixed up and see yer off on the trail, if yer'll split with me on what yer get for the doll rags. What say?"

"I'm not quite sure," returned Trent, "that I understand your proposition, but I'm willing to place myself unreservedly in your hands."

"Come on, bo—foller me!"

Across from the square the tramp halted before a pawn-shop. Without a word Trent followed his guide within. A sallow-faced youth came forward.

"Ikey," greeted the hobo familiarly, "Frisco Fat and no bunk. How much for the layout on the kid? Some rags, some jack."



The clerk led the way to a rack of worn garments. Before a faded corduroy he halted.

"Two dollars."

"Come on!" snarled Trent's companion, taking him by the arm.

"Vait!" implored the shopkeeper.

"Does the keester go, too?"

"Yeh."

"Five dollars and the suit for the whole layout."

"Make it six, and it goes."

"Five and a half."

"Aw right, Ikey! Shed 'em, kid."

"Just a moment," said Trent pleasantly. "I'm afraid business is rather mystifying to me. Tell me, just what is the status of the proposition?"

"Ain't nothin' to it," explained Frisco Fat. "Yer gives him the rags yer got on, and the keester, and he slips yer this here and some iron men."

"But how about the contents of the suit-case? I don't imagine they are included in the trade, since our friend knows nothing of them. How am I to carry my things?"

"What yer want'er carry?"

"Well, I have a few changes of linen, shaving things, a tooth-brush, and some other trifles."

"Wrap 'em in a shirt. How in hell yer think yer kin hit the road with them things?"—pointing to the neat black garments and the suit-case. "Yer wanna make an easy getaway, don'tcher?"

"I bow before experience," returned Trent.

"S aw right, 's aw right," muttered Frisco Fat. "Hustle! I gotter date with a tall one."

"Girl?"

"Naw—beer."

Behind the rack of clothing the change of garments was quickly made. The corduroy fitted generously, and it was necessary to turn up the trousers several inches. Yet, reflected Trent, as box-car raiment it was obviously more suitable than the carefully tailored broadcloth. His soft hat he retained, as entirely congruous.

"That's the ticket!" felicitated Frisco Fat. "Here's yer bit, bo." He handed over two one-dollar bills and a fifty-cent piece. "That's yer half."

"My half? Ah, yes," smiled Trent. "Five dollars and fifty cents, was it not? I'm afraid, Frisco, that your training in

higher mathematics has been outrageously neglected. As Professor Paxton would say—"

"Huh?"

"Or perhaps it is merely your sense of division that is impaired. That is an aberration quite distinct from—"

"Say," cut in the tramp, "don't I get my bit for swingin' the deal?"

"Is it customary?"

"Right, ain't it, Ikey?"

"Sure, sure!"

"Come on," growled the hobo impatiently. "Yer wanna beat it, don'tcher?"

Carrying the contents of his suit-case in a knotted shirt, Trent followed Frisco from the store. An impish thought brought a laugh to the young man's lips. He imagined himself back in Walsingham walking into a faculty conference attired as he was.

"Ye're a pretty good guy," remarked his elongated companion; "an' jus' for that I'm goin' to go wid yer to the yards and see yer safe and snug."

"You are very good."

A walk of ten minutes brought them to the fan of tracks that was the railroad yards. River Falls was a division, shop, and junction point for two trunk systems and several smaller lines.

"There!" Trent pointed eagerly to a string of box cars. "There's one that's open. Looks like a rather clean one from here, too."

"Forget it," snapped Frisco. "That one may stick around here for a month. Let's look for a live one. And, say, kid, better go easy and get under cover. The bulls may be layin' fer yer."

"Bulls? For me?"

Disgust overspread the features of the tramp. He halted.

"What yer think ye're puttin' over? Cops ain't got nothin' to do with it, huh? Beatin' it fer yer health, I s'pose!"

Trent looked blank. Newspaper reading, his only vulgar vice, came to the rescue.

"In a way I am."

"Yeh!" snorted Frisco. "I'll bet y' are! What was it, kid—nifty pen work, bump off a guy, or what?"

"I assure you—"

"Aw right, aw right!" The hobo waved a magnanimous and dirty hand. "You don't have to spill it. Ain't a bad idee. Keep yer mouth shut, and you won't swaller no flies. Get back there!" Roughly

he jerked Trent behind a box car. "There's yer chance!"

On an adjoining track an engine with a string of trailers was slowly puffing its way toward them.

"There'll be an empty in the lot. Grab it," Trent's mentor instructed him.

"While in motion?" gasped the pupil.

"Gawd, ye're a flat-head! See how slow it's comin'? When yer see an open one, flip your bundle in and then jump in after it. Get me?"

"In a way."

"Yer hopped wagons when yer was a kid, didn'tcher? The same stunt. Watch me. See?"

The train was still some distance away. With the empty car by which they stood, Frisco went through the pantomime of hopping a freight. Placing both hands on the edge of the rough flooring, he took a rapid step forward and hoisted himself within.

"Easy, ain't it?"

"Quite simple, I should say."

Trent laughed. He was feeling adventurously gay, on the exulting edge of the great exploration into life.

The laboring locomotive came abreast, moving with what appeared to be increased speed. Car after car passed, all sealed.

"There'll be an empty soon," assured the tramp. "There—get it!"

"Good-by, Frisco. Thanks!"

With an awkward movement Trent threw his bundle into the moving blackness, ran along a few steps, lost his footing, recovered with a desperate effort, and fell, weak and panting, into a pitching heap of wet straw.

Exhausted by this unaccustomed feat, he lay with his eyes closed. The bumping growing uncomfortable, he sat up and looked around. Despite the open door it was murky within, and it was some time before his vision could penetrate to the far corners.

The car had apparently been loaded with red building-brick. Irregular pieces lay about among the heaps of straw. Either it had rained or the load had been wet down. A clammy dampness hung about. Trent turned his attention to the outside.

River Falls and its environs had been left behind. Corn-fields, patches of woods, farmhouses, and shipping-platforms for cattle and hogs weaved by. From the position of the afternoon sun, he knew that he was traveling westward.

Placing the bundle under his head, he lay back contentedly. He was not so utterly helpless after all. His first excursion into the real world of practical things had begun. The first steps in the new pilgrim's progress had been accomplished.

He was moving. He was on his way. Whither? Well, sooner or later one was always thrown off by a brakeman, he understood. The man who had been ordained to determine the adventurer's destination would no doubt attend to his duty.

He fell into a heavy sleep. When he awoke, it was twilight. The scenery without was unchanged. A cow munching grass close to the tracks reminded Trent that he, too, was hungry. It occurred to him that he might have brought food with him—a basket lunch.

"One must learn by experience," he mused. "Frisco Fat would undoubtedly have prepared for such an emergency as this by bringing a snack along. Well, perhaps the brakeman of destiny will soon arrive!"

It was not to be soon, but at once. The train rattled and grated to a jerky stop. Trent thrust his head from the door of the car. In the dusk, ahead of him, loomed a water-tank.

A shouted curse caused him to turn suddenly. A figure descending from a ladder at the side of the car in the rear was waving a belligerent fist and mouthing invectives. Trent made no move, but watched the threatening approach with a quiet smile.

"Beat it, you damned hobo! Be quick, before I knock your dirty head off!"

Trent swung about. Instead of dropping to the ground, however, he sat at the edge of the doorway, idly swinging his feet in space.

"Ah, so you've come, have you?" he remarked chattily. "May I ask how far we are from River Falls?"

"Well, of all the blasted nerve!" exclaimed the brakeman, coming to a halt. "Where the devil are you going?"

"Wherever you wish, my dear sir," was the reply.

The railroad man's gaze traveled from the slender white hands to the smiling eyes and clear cheeks of the supposed tramp. His truculence died down.

"Got a card?" he demanded.

Trent made a move toward his inside coat pocket.

"I'm sorry, but in changing my clothes I forgot to transfer my visiting cards. I—" "Visiting cards, hell! Ain't you got a union card—your working card?"

Trent laughed.

"You flatter me. I am very much of an unorganized laborer."

"Got any money?"

"Yes, a bit, but none for traveling expenses. What little I have I must conserve for my vital needs. Had I ample funds, I would not have intruded upon your hospitality. I—"

"You're a slick crook, ain't you?" snarled the brakeman, his anger again rising.

"That is hardly complimentary," returned Trent; "but as a human entity you are no doubt entitled to draw your own conclusions. May I ask your name?"

"What for?"

"You are the agent of predestination," the young man solemnly assured him. "It would—"

The brakeman's jaw dropped.

"Say!" he rasped. "You ain't one of the company's bulls, are you?"

"I?"

"If you are, you're barkin' up against the wrong tree. I ain't no agent for nobody. There ain't no bootleggin' bein' done on this run."

"Immaterial," replied Trent, "but reassuring. Tell me, how far are we from Valley Falls?"

"Hundred and five miles. Hopetown is six miles farther on. Wanna go there?"

"So you have determined."

"Duck in," hissed the brakeman. "Here comes the big guy, and he's hell on hobos."

A heavy-set figure was approaching from the rear end of the train. Trent saw that the newcomer had observed him. Reaching for his bundle, he slid to the ground.

"Thanks," he said. "I think I had better get off here. I am thirsty, and I perceive water dripping from yonder nozzle. It is not to be resisted. Besides, my cramped limbs cry for exercise. *Au revoir*, hand of fate!"

"Nut!" grunted the brakeman.

It was with a feeling of relief that he saw the mysterious youth cross over to the highway beyond the tracks. A signal from the front end, and the long train of box cars and flats pulled off. Trent gazed after it until the red light on the tail of the caboose disappeared in the growing darkness.

"Hopetown!" he muttered. "What could be more propitious?"

#### IV

At the water-tank Trent quenched his thirst by the primitive expedient of holding back his head and permitting the trickle from the hose to fall into his open mouth. He started off stiffly in the direction taken by the freight.

After a while the walking became pleasant. He inhaled deeply of the warm air of dusk and swung his arms spiritedly. It was years since he had left Walsingham and its cramped concomitants.

Despite the heavy meal he had eaten at noon, hunger again cried. It was a totally new experience for Trent. Twice in one day he had craved food! As far back as he could remember eating had been but a mere routine rite, neither to be looked forward to nor to be looked back upon with any feeling.

After about a mile the unaccustomed exertion began telling on his weak frame. Heavy with weariness, he sat down by the roadside. After a while he rose, but dropped back again with a feeble smile. His unpractised legs had revolted against further effort.

It had grown quite dark. His groping eyes caught the glimmer of a light some distance to the right. He forced himself to his feet and moved slowly toward the flickering beacon.

The light grew fixed and brighter, and as the young moon drifted from behind a cloud he made out a farmhouse set well back from the road. The raucous barking of a dog came to his ears.

Trent hastened his dragging steps and reached the gate of the yard. A vicious-looking bulldog was leaping frothily against the pickets. Without hesitation the wayfarer swung open the gate and entered. The animal leaped about him, snarling and snapping with dripping jaws.

"Behave, Rover!" ordered Trent, holding up an admonishing hand. "Or is your name Tray? You have no intention of biting me, you know," he continued, gazing into the flaring eyes of the brute. "You bark too much."

The light in the window was reenforced by another in the doorway.

"Down, Spot!"

It was a woman's voice. Trent looked up.

"Thank you, madam," he said, lifting his hat. "Your dog is rather unsociable, is he not?"

The woman, middle-aged, stout, and suspicious, regarded the intruder closely.

"What are you—a tramp?" she asked sharply.

"Why, yes, I believe I am. 'Wayfarer,' I should say, would perhaps be a more euphonious way of expressing it. I am very hungry and would like to have food. I will pay for it."

The woman saw the weariness of the youthful features, and her grimness relaxed a little.

"I ain't got much. Why don't you go into Hopetown? It's only about four miles."

"My physical weariness must be my excuse for this intrusion, madam," Trent explained politely.

"You do look poorly," she admitted. "Well, come on in. I might be able to scrape some cold stuff together; but listen here, young man. My husband ain't home, but don't you dare to try no monkey-shines. The hired man's here, and I ain't so feeble myself!"

"You flatter my frail strength," replied Trent, with a bow.

The farmer's wife led the way to the kitchen. There were two occupants—one a stout individual, half-asleep against the wall, a pipe threatening momentarily to fall from his loose, partly open lips; the other a boy of perhaps fourteen, leaning unhygienically over a table with an open book and a tablet spread before him.

The man in the corner glanced up idly and returned to his semi-coma. The woman addressed the boy.

"Clean up that mess from the table, Asher. I want to feed this man. 'Pears to me you've been trifling away enough time on that foolishness, anyway!"

"Aw, ma!" protested the lad. "I got to get this done to-night."

Trent glanced at the tablet and smiled.

"Just a moment, madam, if you will allow me," he said, turning to the hostess. "I believe I can help your son. What's the trouble, my lad?"

"Geometry," muttered the boy shortly. "What do you know about it?"

"I knew Euclid quite intimately at one time. I observe you are struggling with the *pons asinorum*."

"The what?"

"The *pons*—the proposition that the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares on the other two sides."

The boy's eyes lit up eagerly.

"That's it. Can you prove it, mister?"

"I believe so. Let me see. How far have you got?"

With a nod to the woman, who was busied with eggs at the stove, Trent pulled a chair over and sat down by Asher. He studied the tablet.

"I see," he said. "Here is your mistake. You must work from the angles. Let me have your pencil."

He drew a few dotted lines, looking up after each stroke to see if the lad followed.

"Now, there," he finished. "Q.E.D."

"That's easy, isn't it?" exclaimed the boy.

"Very. So is everything in life if properly approached."

"Now go to bed, Asher," put in his mother.

The boy rose and backed out of the door without taking his adoring eyes from Trent.

"I ain't got nothing," said the woman, "but some bacon and eggs and some milk."

"Nectar and ambrosia!"

"I don't know what you're talking about, but what I got is all you get."

Trent disposed of the food rapidly and completely. At the end he drew fifty cents from his small store.

"I ain't in the restaurant business," returned the woman. "You were hungry, and I fed you. I'm a Christian, I am."

"You are indeed," agreed the young man, "and a very kind-hearted lady. May I repay you with labor?"

"You've already paid. You fixed it so Asher could go to bed. It seems I never can get him away from that geom'try."

"An engaging subject, truly!"

Trent reached for his hat and rose stiffly through a mist of languor. In the dim light his pale features shone ghastly.

"Hiram, get out of there and go to bed!" cried the woman. "This young man is going to sleep in here to-night."

The farm-hand blinked, grunted, and departed.

"Please—" began Trent.

"I'll fix you a shake-down on the floor," she interrupted. "You looked too petered out to walk any to-night. I'm a Christian, I am."

"Madam, you're an angel," returned Trent gallantly.



He sat down by the table, and his head dropped to his crossed arms. It had been an eventful day.

## V

HOPETOWN was not named after the sentiment that is said to spring eternal in the human breast. Old Abijah Hope was the town's godfather. Back in the thirties he had planted a store at the forks of the creek. Progress came through the cottonwoods and beat a path to his door. Abijah lived long enough to sell station sites and terminal facilities to two railroads, to dispose of rich mineral leases, and to outvote the rest of the stockholders in a couple of banks and three or four industries. When he was finally called behind the black curtain, the executors took an inventory of the town and called it Abijah Hope's estate.

What Abijah had taken his son Tracy held. The younger Hope was not an aggressive man, but the town grew rapidly, and unearned increment forced its way into his keeping. Living in retirement in his sprawling house on the hill, he lounged lazily in the dusty library, while outside men haggled and cursed and bid in tens of thousands for bits of rocky land that old Abijah had taken in payment for bad debts, covering perhaps a suit of clothes or a jug of corn whisky. Tracy begat Arnim, and then was called to his fathers.

Where Abijah Hope had been content to walk and Tracy Hope to ride behind a span, Arnim required three automobiles, two of foreign make. At twenty-five the millions of the house of Hope were turned over to him unconditionally, and the city builded by his grandfather had its first opportunity to get a look at the founder's money.

Arnim Hope almost immediately entered into a race with the unearned increment. Despite the handicap held by the latter, he would have caught up with it in less than a year, but for the discovery of oil on some otherwise worthless acres outside of the town. A new mark was set for the youth to shoot at, but he girded his loins of extravagance and went after it, sitting up at night to figure out new holes into which to drop his dollars. Wild trips to New York, strings of matched pearls for complacent shop-girls, sables for casual companions of a night—Arnim's checks fell from his fingers like an imitation snowfall in "Way Down East."

When the dry cackle of prohibition was heard o'er the land, Arnim aroused himself for the first time, and acted with decision. Summoning his man of business, he handed him a slip of paper.

"Attend to it at once, Heflin," he briefly ordered.

"Good Heavens!" was the reply. "It would take a warehouse a block square to house all that stuff! Have you any idea of the amount of space that would be required for five hundred barrels of whisky, not to mention the other stuff?"

Hope made a gesture of impatience.

"You annoy me, Heflin. Attend to it," he added curtly, and rose.

"Now just a moment, Mr. Hope. Under the bill now before Congress, which is virtually certain to become a law, the only liquor you may have in your possession must be stored in your place of residence. I trust you don't plan to live in a warehouse!"

"I don't object. Have a warehouse built with a couple of rooms, a bath, and a garage. That would—"

"May I say a few words further?"

"Oh, very well," yawned Arnim; "but you're a hell of a pest!"

"Don't you think, Mr. Hope, that you are rather overdoing this thing? What possible use can you find for hundreds of barrels of whisky, a thousand cases of champagne, and all these cordials and liqueurs that you have listed? You can't possibly drink a fraction of that quantity."

"Oh, a friend may drop in occasionally, you know. Even you, Heflin, may develop a thirst."

"Hardly. I would suggest, Mr. Hope, that you should purchase only such an amount of liquor as you can conveniently store in the basement of your home. That would surely be ample for all practical purposes."

"Practical, practical!" scoffed Arnim. "I don't want to be practical. There's no fun in it."

"Remember," continued Heflin, "it was your father's desire that you should continue your residence at the old home."

The man of business finally succeeded in getting the amount of liquor cut down, but only after he had agreed to have a sub-basement excavated under the present large cellar, and to fill both to capacity.

"You must bear in mind," cautioned Heflin, "that such a store of liquor will be

a great temptation to thieves. Your very life may be endangered."

"Oh, forget it, you old croaker!" snapped Hope. "Put some armor-plate around it and hire a couple of guards, if you want to. What do I care? I employ you to look after details. I have wasted too damned much time with you already!"

Young Hope's orders were carried out. The cellar was dug, and thereafter, for days and weeks, wagons loaded with barrels and cases puffed their way up the hill to Hope House. Arnim was away on one of his *tours de joie* at the time.

The series of orgies that followed his return made measurable inroads into the vast hoard of spirits. The young man had apparently set out to show Heflin that the supply provided was totally inadequate. A guard had been employed to keep an eye on the stock, but after a month spent chiefly in carrying belligerent and saturated bloods to taxicabs and up to beds, he resigned. He was not replaced.

Heflin saw little of his employer. As the growing income of the estate was sufficient to meet the terrific demands upon it, there was little reason for him to see Hope. However, in the fall of 1920 something came up that Heflin felt incapable of dealing with on his own initiative.

After three days of telephoning and cajoling, Arnim was finally brought to his down-town office. His red-rimmed eyes, his cheeks that drooped pastily, his quivering hands, told of the emptying cellar.

"What do you want?" he snarled, dropping heavily into a proffered chair.

"Just a few moments' conversation, Mr. Hope. We can dispose of the business in five minutes. You know we are building an addition to the Acme Works, and—"

"Are we? What about it? Can't you look after it?"

"Ordinarily, yes. You will recall that I have never mentioned it to you before. Now this situation has arisen—we let the contract to Gleason & Co. for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, but they can't go through with it."

"What do you mean, can't? Why?"

"I thought," went on Heflin, "when they made the bid, that it was too low. It was thirty thousand dollars out of line with the others. However, the firm is a reputable one, and I assumed that they had inside information on a coming drop in materials that would justify their figure."

"Yes, yes," yawned Hope.

"He came in three days ago," continued the man of business, "and told me he was about through. Steel and lumber and labor—everything, in fact, has gone up to such an extent that he will be ruined if he has to carry out the contract. He's had a couple of strikes and is far behind schedule. There's a penalty of a hundred dollars a day, you know."

"What does he want us to do?"

"He frankly admits that he has no legal recourse, but he asks us to add to the contract price an amount covering the increases in the prices of labor and material since the date of the agreement. He also wants us to have the First National advance funds. He himself has none, and the banks have shut down on him. If we help him, he'll come out about even. There is no longer a question of profit for him."

Hope made a gesture of impatience.

"I understand only about one-half of what you're saying. What do you think we ought to do?"

"Personally, I am in favor of granting his request. I had figured on spending about two hundred thousand dollars for the addition, so we really won't be losing anything, and we may keep the poor fellow from going under."

"All right!" said Hope, rising. "That's over with."

"I'll call Preston right away," remarked Heflin, as Arnim reached the door. "The old man will be pleased."

"Go to it!" mumbled his employer. Suddenly he stopped and turned narrowed eyes on his agent. "Preston?" he demanded. "What has he got to do with it? I thought you said—"

"You know, Mr. Hope, don't you, that Jim Preston is Gleason & Co.? Old man Gleason has been dead five years."

"Preston, huh!" grunted Hope. "Lives out on Maple Avenue, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

Hope laughed harshly.

"The deal's off, Heflin," he snapped truculently. "I wouldn't do a damned thing for Preston. Smash him to the wall! Understand me? Smash him! Insist on him going through with the contract to the letter, and see that every cent of the penalties is paid."

"But, Mr. Hope—"

"Don't argue with me!" snarled Arnim. "You—" He hesitated, and a cold smile

came to his puffed lips. "I've thought of something else. Hold him off for a week or two. Maybe I'll help him after all."

"I hope so."

"Maybe I will!" muttered the young man, and slammed his way out.

## VI

THE foundation for the addition to the Acme Works had been completed after an arduous struggle with unforeseen quicksands and adverse weather. Now the stages and framework for the steel structure were rising. In the bright sunshine a score or more men were standing about, waiting for the eight o'clock whistle. To one in the group, who carried a carpenter's kit, a slender young man in corduroy approached.

"I beg your pardon," he said with an engaging smile. "Can I get work here?"

"See the boss—Mike Eagan," was the reply.

"Nothing would please me more," answered Trent, "if I could only isolate the gentleman."

A shrill blast of steam interrupted. When it had died away, a figure in business clothes emerged from the structure.

"Come on, boys!" he shouted.

"That," concluded Trent, "must be Mr. Eagan. He wears the raiment and air of command."

The thick-set, florid boss looked the applicant over with eyes of mild sarcasm.

"What can you do?"

"I love work," replied Trent. "May I have some?"

"Sure!" laughed Eagan. "You look like you loved work, with them mitts!"

The young man followed the foreman's glance to his thin, white fingers.

"I'll admit," he conceded, "that they would hardly qualify me as a horny-handed son of toil; but the fact remains that I must find something to do, and I am willing to do anything."

Something in the applicant's manner impressed Eagan.

"I'd like to give you work, bub," he said kindly, "but you couldn't stand this heavy stuff. Been sick, haven't you?"

"Slightly," returned Trent; "but there must be something around here that is not beyond me—such as carrying pieces of wood to the workmen. I see several men over there doing it. Some of those timbers are rather heavy, of course; but I might

start with a splinter, work my way up to a lath or a shingle, and thus eventually to the big poles. Shall I start in right now?"

"All right," laughed the boss. "I'll give you a day's work, anyhow. Go over there and tell the big Swede that I sent you. He'll show you what to do."

Trent spent the greater part of the morning moving boards from one pile of lumber to another.

"How goes it?" asked Eagan, passing his way.

"Do you know," returned Trent, "I believe that I have at last found my true vocation in life? There is something in the symmetry of these boards, something in their uniformity and cleanliness, that reminds me—"

"I forgot to tell you," interrupted the other hastily, "that the pay is four dollars a day."

"Not at all bad," thought the A.B., A.M., and Ph. D. "That's twelve hundred dollars a year—about the pay of a first-class instructor."

He found the work of lifting and pulling tiring enough, but in a way that carried refreshment. His arms and back ached from the unwonted physical exertion, but his mind was restfully clear and his spirit buoyant.

Toward noon he was set to carrying two-by-fours into the building. Not looking ahead carefully, he collided with an object that let loose a flood of curses.

"Damn you!" cried the victim, rubbing his forehead. "Why don't you look where you're going? I got a mind to bust your face in!"

"That," returned Trent, looking into the bellicose eyes of a sturdy youth of his own age, "is an unworthy thought. I regret my carelessness exceedingly."

The other grunted something.

"If you desire," the timber-bearer went on with a bland smile, "I'll permit you to bump into me with a two-by-four—no, a four-by-eight. You are entitled to both punitive and exemplary damages."

"Nut!" growled the injured party, and moved away.

From the big Swede Trent learned, later, that the youth with whom he had collided was one Buck Staley, the foreman's assistant. His informant expressed surprise that he had escaped without a beating.

"He bane have bad temper," Trent was told.

Returning from lunch at a near-by counter restaurant, Trent found Staley sitting on a nail-barrel.

"Since you are the only one here I have actually met," he said pleasantly, "I would like to ask a favor of you."

"Me?" asked the near-boss, in surprise. "What do you want?"

"I'm a stranger here, Mr. Staley. My name is Trent—Henry Trent. I wonder if you could tell me where I might get a room cheap?"

Buck looked into the clear eyes angrily. Then he laughed.

"You're a funny guy! First you nearly brain me with a scantling, then you come around to me with your troubles."

"That," he was assured, "is as it should be. I did you an evil turn. As reparation I offer you the opportunity of doing a good deed. I make what amends I can."

"Say, boy, you know all the hard words, don't you?"

"Some," was the smiling rejoinder. "I used to be a teacher. I'm using the soft ones now, though."

"What's the idea?" asked Staley suspiciously. "What are you doing here on the lumber-pile? Are you a stool-pigeon, or one of them efficiency things? Preston send you to watch us?"

"Preston? Who is he? By the way," went on Trent, "you're the third man who has regarded me with suspicion. Everybody seems to think I am a detective or a spy of sorts. Why?"

"Well," muttered Staley, "you don't look as if you properly belonged here—that's all. How do you happen to be doing this, anyhow?"

"It's very simple. I was a teacher. Confinement brought me near a breakdown. I was told to get out into the open air, take up manual labor, and give my brain a rest."

"You can give it a good rest here," was the reply. "All you need on this job is a strong back and a weak mind. You might just as well use your eyes a little, though," he finished, with a rueful wipe at the welt on his forehead.

"Getting back to the subject of my inquiry," began Trent.

"There's a room or two where I'm living. I'll take you there this evening, if you want, and if you don't bump me off with a plank before the day is over."

"I shall see that your life is preserved

at all hazards. Thanks! You are very good."

At the closing whistle Trent sought out Eagan.

"Would you like to see more of me?" he asked.

"If the big Swede can stand you, I can," returned the foreman shortly.

At Staley's boarding-house the émigré from Walsingham obtained a small room at a reasonable rental. It adjoined his new friend's. Before bestowing his aching body on the narrow bed, he wrote to his uncle. Part of the letter read:

Send me my gray suit of clothes and the things you will find in the upper drawer of the chiffonier. Do not dare include a book. Regard this address as confidential. Theories assaying one hundred per cent. Feeling remarkably fine. Am engaged in the lumber business.

That night he rested like the dead. At seven o'clock in the morning he awoke with joints that were stiff and a back that groaned with each movement, however slight. A strange, delightful odor came to his nostrils. He followed it down-stairs and eventually reached its source in the dining-room. The odor, it developed, came from ham and eggs.

Two weeks passed. The work on the lumber-piles continued to be a heavy tax on the unused muscles of the college instructor, but as the days went by it seemed to grow lighter. Refreshed by change of scene and occupation, Trent's keenly acquisitive mind wandered, pleasantly unfettered, in new fields and among new companions, gathering novel impressions and instinctively arranging and correlating them with the automatic precision of the trained.

Being from opposite poles, Staley and the newcomer found an attraction for each other that developed into a strong liking.

"Slim," said the assistant foreman at the end of the first week, "why don't you get yourself a decent job? What's the use of having brains if you don't get no good out of them?"

"What's the use," countered Trent, "of having hands and physical strength if you don't use them?"

"There ain't no money in strength, kid. Besides, I don't think our jobs down at the Acme are going to last so long, either."

"Why? They've only just started the building."



"Yeh," muttered Staley, "but things don't look so good to me down there. I think old man Preston has bitten off more than he can chew. From what I heard the other day, we're lucky if they're able to pay off Saturday. The old man doesn't know how to handle a job of this size. He's too square for the big stuff. Instead of subletting the work and getting his bit all along the line, he's trying to handle the whole thing himself without having the cush. He's slower than molasses, too. It's a Hope job, and they're in a hurry, too."

"Hope? Town named after him?"

"He is the town, Slim. What he doesn't own in this burg he's got a mortgage on, including all the booze in the place. Did you ever see his place? It's only a few blocks up the street. Want to walk there?"

Staley led the way up the hill. A native of Hopetown, he regaled Trent with a brief but lurid history of the town's leading family. Concerning the present bearer of the name, he said:

"I've seen young Hope a dozen times in the last few years, and he's been soused each time. He's a bad actor all around. He's had rows with the fathers of half a dozen girls. He runs around with all kinds of rats, too. Everybody seems to be afraid of him, and he gets away with rough stuff that would put you or me on the blink in a minute. Somebody 'll get him some day. There's the house."

On the crest of the rise, in a large garden surrounded by a high iron fence, was the Hope mansion—an old-fashioned stone house cluttered with wings, porticoes, and a wild array of gingerbread. At the period when it was built, simplicity had not yet struck its high and luxurious note in architecture. The grandeur of a home was in proportion to the grotesqueness of its irregularities. Straight lines in building were lines of parsimony; clutter was the symbol of wealth.

The gateway was open, and the young men walked a few steps into the grounds. There was a cast-iron stag on the lawn.

"See those barred windows below there?" pointed Staley. "There are two cellars down there. I hear he's got more than a hundred barrels of whisky."

"Quite a quaff!" commented Trent.

A crunching sound, and the intruders turned. An automobile of a racing type was approaching, lurching crazily up the graveled hill road.

"That must be Arnim Hope," whispered Staley. "Lit up as usual! What do you think of that nut driving like that?"

The machine turned into the garden, barely missing one of the gate-posts. Trent caught a glimpse of puffy cheeks and protruding eyes. Fifty feet beyond the car came to a grinding stop. A stout young man alighted and swayingly approached.

"Let's beat it!" hissed Staley.

Trent shook his head.

"That would be rude, Buck. The gentleman apparently wishes to speak to us. Let us await his pleasure or displeasure, as the case may be."

Hope halted before the pair. His blood-streaked eyes glared angrily. Suddenly he laughed thickly.

"I know what you fellows want!"

"Yes?" queried Trent politely.

Arnim lifted a solemn finger.

"You want a drink," he said gravely. "Everybody wants a drink. I'll give you one. Come on! Want company, anyway. Can't drink alone. 'Gainst my principles and const'tution. You see"—he lurched a step forward—"if I drink alone, I'd have more to drink, and it might hurt my const'tution. You see the joke, don't you?" His voice dropped to a whine. "Don't you?" he repeated, placing a shaky hand on Trent's shoulder.

"Yes, indeed," was the reply. "That is, I get the spirit of it."

Trent disengaged himself and moved back from the stout young man's powerful breath. Hope beamed.

"You're a good fellow! You, too," he added, slapping Staley on the back. "Come on! Let's have a drink—lots o' drinks!"

"Thank you," returned Trent, "but I don't think my friend and I would care to indulge."

"Huh!" snarled Arnim. "Don't care to drink with me! Know who I am?"

"No. What are you?"

"What are I—am I? Say, that's funny! You're a good guy. Come on—have a drink. I like you. You remind me of a fellow I used to know."

Trent shook his head. Hope seized him by the arm.

"Be a nice fellow," he pleaded. "Come on! I'm all alone in the big house—see how big it is! I'll give you lots to drink and show you some pretty pictures." He leaned over, whispering. "I'll take you

down in the cellar, and show you something 'll make your mouth water. Aw, come on! I'm lonesome. Keep me company, won't you? See how big the house is, and I'm all alone," he whimpered.

The absurdity of the sodden hulk blubbering about his lonesomeness struck the inexperienced Trent with something that savored of pity. Moreover, Staley's account of the alleged splendors of the residence and its works of art had aroused his curiosity.

"Come on, Buck," he said. "Let us accompany Mr. Hope to his home for a few moments."

"Good boy, good boy!" blatted Hope. "Lots to drink! Basement full—me, too. Good joke! What you think?"

Leaving the automobile standing where it was, Arnim led the way to the house. A man servant was standing by the open door.

"Friends of mine," announced the master with a wave of his hand. "Drinks in the library—the ten-year-old stuff. I like you. Nothing too good for people I like!"

The library was a large, somber room, furnished in ponderous oak. Along the walls were heavily laden book-shelves, but the severe symmetry of the volumes showed that they had been disturbed but little. An etching of merit, a painting of distinction, met Trent's eyes. The father of the present Hope had been a man of some taste in such things.

"Sit down," said the host. "Be cheated, gentlemen. Tabor," he growled, "hurry up that stuff! Getting old, Tabor is. Family retainer, kind of an heirloom. Slowing up too much. Got to have speed! Big climb down there. Ought to have—gosh, why didn't I think of that before?"

Tabor entered with a tray containing glasses, a quart bottle of whisky, and a carafe of water.

"Make a note." Hope turned to his servant. "Tell Heflin to-morrow to build an elevator to the cellar. Getting slow, Tabor! Must have pep. Fill up, boys! Lots more where this came from. Volstead can't bluff me. Go to it!"

Staley poured himself a three-finger draft. Trent moistened the bottom of his glass and filled it to the top with water. Hope took a generous portion.

"Over the river!" he announced.

The three swallowed their drinks, Arnim his at one gulp.

"Never use chasers," he explained thickly, as Buck reached for the water. "Spoils good booze. Lots of water in the world, not much whisky. Ever hear story of Kentucky colonel?"

Trent shook his head.

"Used to blindfold himself before taking a drink. Said the sight of good liquor made his mouth water, and the water got into the whisky and spoiled it. Smart man, huh? Have another drink? No? Maybe later on. Lots more where it came from. Basement full—two basements. Come on, show you my picture gallery."

Gripping the edge of the table, Hope hoisted himself to his feet. His guests followed his unsteady steps to a room at the right of the library. One wall was literally covered with photographs of women. Trent looked at them idly. There were pictures of chorus-girls in abbreviated skirts, of women with lust on their lips and sordidness in their eyes. Here and there was a face that seemed out of place—a lily among crimson weeds.

"Know 'em all," babbled Hope. "Good friends of mine. Loved 'em all once. See this one?" He pointed to a voluptuous damsel with bared breast. "Tell you a funny story."

He began an incoherent amorous narrative. Trent caught but a few sentences; then he lost interest. A small cabinet photograph, somewhat separated from the others, held his gaze. It was a picture of a young girl with clear eyes, wide forehead, well-modeled, aristocratic features, and soft, wavy hair. Everything about her spelled cleanliness and intelligence. A puzzled wrinkle came into Trent's forehead.

Hope's voice obtruded.

"Jump into the river if you want to," I told her, and I walked away. I was just tired of her, see?"

Disgustedly, Trent returned his eyes to the photograph.

"Beauty, ain't she?" Arnim suddenly cut in.

"Er—who?"

"The chicken you're looking at. Snap-py looker, ain't she? That's Janet. Don't know Janet, do you? I love Janet!"

"How did you get this picture?"

"Janet's? Gave it to me. They all give 'em to me. What do you think?"

"Hope," said Trent, taking him by the arm, "I think you're a liar. That girl never gave you her photograph!"

"The devil! Know her?"

"No, I don't; but she never gave you that picture. Therefore I shall remove it from your collection—thus."

A tack held the photograph to the wall. With a jerk Trent freed it. Hope seemed dazed.

"Come on, Buck! Let's go. I've had enough of this."

"Me, too," grunted Staley. "I feel like taking a wallop—"

"What's the matter?" muttered Hope. "Give me my picture! Give me back Janet!" He came toward them.

"Go to hell!" said Buck roughly.

"Don't," said Trent. "He'd impair the morals of the place. Come on, Buck!"

The door of the gallery slammed in Hope's face.

"Whose picture is it?" asked Staley, when they were once again in the clear, pure air of the garden. "Who is she?"

"Don't know," returned Trent; "but I feel as if I had rescued an innocent girl from a house of evil."

## VII

"SAY!" greeted Eagan, the next morning. "Before you shed them doll rags of yours, I want you to go down-town."

For the past few days Trent had been coming to work in the neat gray suit sent on by his uncle, making the change to corduroy and hickory shirt at the building.

"Know where Preston's office is?" Eagan asked him.

"No, but I imagine that I can find it."

"It's in the Hope Building, Eighth and Main. Tell the old man that I need another blue-print of the rear elevation—No. 8 it is. Tell him the one I have is so dirty that I can't make it out any more. Bring it right back. He's on the seventh floor. Oh, another thing—ask him if everything is all right for Saturday. He'll know."

Trent had little difficulty in finding the Hope Building. Its twelve stories stood out, prosperously insolent, in the center of the business section. Close to the elevator on the seventh floor he found the sign on the corrugated glass door:

GLEASON & CO.  
CONTRACTORS AND BUILDERS  
JAMES PRESTON, PRESIDENT

"I'm from the Acme job," the young man informed a gum-chewer, who was man-icuring her nails. "Mr. Preston in?"

Without looking up, the girl pointed with a nail-file to a door at her left. Trent opened it, then halted suddenly. He saw a shock of gray hair with a shining object next to it; then the complete picture of a man standing by a roll-top desk with a revolver leveled at his temple.

The caller stepped forward lightly, seized the limply held weapon, and placed it in his pocket. The older man gazed at him blankly.

"Mr. Preston?" asked Trent pleasantly.

The builder's eyes maintained their vacant stare.

"I'm from the building," the caller went on conversationally. "Mr. Eagan sent me after a blue-print—No. 8."

"No. 8?" Preston mechanically repeated.

"Rear elevation, I believe he called it," explained Trent; "though just what that means I haven't the slightest idea. I'm quite sure, however, that Mr. Eagan said No. 8."

Preston walked to the other side of the desk and slumped heavily into a wide swivel chair. His hands went to his eyes and his head sank. Trent touched the bowed shoulders.

"Mr. Preston," he said gently, "may I have the blue-print? You know," he laughed, "Eagan will fire me unless I get back quickly."

The contractor straightened and fumbled with a desk drawer. Without opening it, he turned and faced Trent.

"Well?" he asked. There was a tremor in his voice. "Well? Why didn't you let me do it?"

"Do what?"

"You know well enough. You saw what I was going to do. Who are you?"

"I? I am but a humble worker on your lumber-piles. Perhaps I should beg your pardon for interfering in your personal affairs, but really I couldn't let you take your life. I'd never have found the blue-print by myself. Buildings must go up, you know, Mr. Preston, regardless of personal predilections. Oh, by the way, Mr. Eagan wanted me to ask you if everything is all right for Saturday."

A bitter exclamation came from the old man's lips.

"That's just why I wanted to use the gun. Nothing is all right for Saturday or any other day. Won't you give me the revolver?"

"Here," said Trent, taking the auto-

matic from his pocket and placing it on the desk.

Preston snatched it eagerly, hesitated, and turned his eyes upon the youth. The latter was smiling amiably. The revolver clattered on the desk.

"I knew you wouldn't use it," remarked Trent. "The moment of high excitement is over. The peak of emotion is passed. Men don't do spectacular things while coasting down-hill from a climax. As Heracles of Dardana so well put it—"

"Leave me alone," groaned Preston. "Go away!"

"Don't forget my blue-print."

"Hell!" snapped the builder, rising to actualities. "Here's your confounded blue-print. Take it and go!"

"Just a moment, Mr. Preston." Trent drew up a chair and fixed smiling eyes on the haggard features before him. "It's none of my business, of course, but I'll venture the opinion that you have been led close to the consummation of a rash act by a chain of circumstances trifling in themselves, but made grave by—"

"Trifling!" Preston laughed mirthlessly. "Is it trifling to be ruined? Is it trifling to be penniless at sixty? Is it trifling to be in debt? Is it trifling to cheat workmen who trust you and depend upon you for their bread? Is it trifling to plunge a well-bred child into poverty? Is—"

"Let's consider the entire matter calmly and rationally. Here"—touching the revolver—"is an effective means to an end. We will thoroughly analyze your situation. If it develops that your position is hopeless, I shall suggest the use of the weapon. If not—" He shrugged. "You yourself shall be the judge. Is that fair?"

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"What matters it? I work on your lumber-piles. My motives can be nothing but good."

"No, that's true. Are you a stranger in town?"

"I am."

"Well," said Preston, "if you must know, I'll tell you just how things stand with me. I have been a contractor in this city for more than thirty years, first with Gleason and then for myself. I have never broken a business promise or failed to live up to specifications. I took that Hope job—"

"The one I'm working on?"

"The Acme. Everything broke wrong

from the beginning. Quicksands, rotten weather, strikes, and increased costs of labor and material when I could get any. All my money is gone, the banks have shut down on me, and I haven't enough cash in sight right now to pay your wages, much less those of the rest of the men. Saturday they'll all quit."

"And by killing yourself—"

"At any rate, I can pay for being a short-sighted damned fool. There'll be a little insurance for the girl. That—"

"How much money do you need?"

"What's the difference? A thousand or a million—"

"How much?" repeated Trent.

"If I had a credit of ten thousand dollars, I believe I could get by. That would enable me to pay the men for a few weeks. I have material on the ground, and by that time I could have the building far enough along to call on Hope for a payment. If I only had enough for the men!"

"You can't get it from the banks?"

"No. I used to be all right with them, but for some reason they've shut down on me this time. I guess they figure I took the job too cheap."

"Admitting that, doesn't thirty years of honest dealing entitle a man to a loan of ten thousand dollars, even on a dubious proposition?"

"Not in this town."

"I see! Then I understand that for ten thousand dollars you would sell your life?"

"Yes."

"Very well—I'll buy it."

"Have you that much money?"

"You flatter me. I'm working on your lumber-pile, but I can get it."

"Where?" eagerly.

"Tell me, which is the biggest bank in Hoptown?"

"The First National," returned Preston. "I've been down on my hands and knees before them!" he added bitterly.

"Where is it?"

"A block south."

"Oh, yes, I remember passing it on the way here. Will you have that blue-print sent to Mr. Eagan, and tell him that everything will be all right on Saturday? Also my apologies to the—er—big Swede. I know that he and the two-by-fours will miss me!"

"But—"

"Will you do as I say? I'll get the money before the day is over."



"How?"

"What difference can that make to a man who has been dead for nearly half an hour?"

"Just as you say. I don't know why you want to help me."

"I don't specifically, but I am writing a thesis, and I believe I can prove a point by you—understand?"

"No, I don't."

"It is not essential. You'll hear from me in a few hours. Good day!"

"Don't you want to take this along with you?"

"No. It's safe with you. You're still sliding down anticlimax hill."

### VIII

A BRASS tablet at the entrance to the First National Bank gave the names of the officers and directors. The president, it appeared, was out of town. A bald, keen-eyed man occupied a desk marked "cashier."

"Mr. Trainor?" asked Trent.

"Yes."

"My name is Henry Trent. I want to borrow ten thousand dollars."

The cashier stiffened with interest.

"Have a seat, Mr. Trent. I don't believe I recall your features."

"No, I'm a stranger in Hopetown."

"I see," was the reply. "Thinking of going into business here?"

"I'm already in business here. I'm working on the lumber-pile at the Acme Building."

"The Acme?" A frown came into the smooth brow of Mr. Trainor. "You are supplying the lumber, is that it?"

"Piecemeal," returned Trent. "I am a laborer."

"I don't—" The cashier's eyes traveled over the neatly clad figure before him and dropped to the thin white hands. Then he laughed.

"Good way to express it, Mr. Trent! We're all laborers in our way, eh?"

"I'm afraid, Mr. Trainor," was the grave response, "that I am not making myself clear. I am a day laborer employed at the Acme Building. I am here to borrow ten thousand dollars."

Trainor's lips tightened.

"I don't understand, and as I am rather busy—"

"I am here," went on the young man, "in behalf of James Preston. He requires that amount immediately."

"We have discussed that matter with Mr. Preston," said the cashier coldly, "and refused the loan. He has no acceptable security, no—"

"No security?" interrupted Trent. "Surely you are mistaken! Are not thirty years of integrity and square dealing good securities? Are not—"

"This is a national bank," cut in Trainor. "We don't lend our money on mere abstractions."

"I see! To your mind an honest life is a mere abstraction. Is not the whole theory of banking primarily based upon community—"

"Besides," continued the cashier, "it is a matter that is entirely out of my hands. The directors—"

"Ah, yes," said Trent, rising. "I have made a mistake. The directors, to be sure!"

"They meet next Tuesday. If you wish to present your application at that time, I shall—"

"The loan must be disposed of to-day," retorted Trent.

Trainor's face wore a thoughtful frown as he watched the young man depart. There had been something in the caller's manner that bespoke authority. His conversation, his general demeanor, did not at all consort with labor on a lumber-pile. Well, it was up to the directors.

Outside, Trent made a few notes. Then he crossed over to the drug-store on the opposite corner and went to the telephone. Quickly he got a number.

"Mr. Ahearn? My name is Trent—Henry Trent. I have an important matter to put before the directors of the First National—a matter involving the most serious consequences. Your presence at the bank is absolutely essential at eleven o'clock. What? No, you can't possibly be too busy to attend this meeting. Eleven o'clock sharp!"

An almost similar conversation was held with Mr. Bankhurst, Mr. Caxton, Mr. Cohn, Mr. Everts, and so on through the entire directorate of the First National. Perspiring but smiling, Trent left the booth and went to the Hope Building. He found Preston, still half-dazed, at his desk. The revolver had vanished.

"It's all right," announced the young man. "You'll have the money at eleven o'clock."

The builder straightened with a start.

"How did you do it?"

"I haven't done it yet, but I will."

"Oh!"

There was a world of disappointment in the monosyllable.

"There's your trouble, Mr. Preston—lack of confidence. You lack it in yourself, you lack it in me. Now—"

There was a knock at the door.

"Busy, dad?" came a girl's voice.

A trim, befurred figure, radiating vital youthfulness, stepped into the room. For the first time the preacher of perfect balance learned what it meant to lose poise. Before him stood the girl of the picture! She had the same wide forehead, the same clear eyes—they were gray—the same high-caste features. The photograph, however, had told only part of the story. Concerning the bronze lights in her hair and the rich coloring of her cheeks and lips it had been colorlessly silent.

"My daughter Janet," broke in the voice of Preston. "Janet, meet Mr. Trent, one of my very best friends."

With a friendly smile the girl extended her hand. Mumbling unintelligibly, Trent took it.

"I must go now," he muttered. "Important engagement!"

Twice Trent walked around the block. His brain back to normal, his poise restored, he set off for the First National.

At eleven o'clock eight of the twelve directors of Hopetown's rock of finance were assembled in the conference-room.

"Vell?" asked Julius Schmidkunz, the hardware man. "Vat are ve here for?"

His scowling question was directed at Archibald Seaton, chairman of the board in the absence of the president. Seaton shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't know any more than you do. Man by the name of Trent called up. Sounded important. Said he wanted me here on a matter of life and death."

"Yah, he tells me der same. Vat it is, a joke? Ain't dere nobody here vat knows?"

His circling eyes met only with negative shakes. Trainor, the cashier, came into the room.

"Vhat ve here for?" Schmidkunz shot at him. "Who dis Trent vhat calls to us to be here?"

"I saw him an hour or so ago for the first time in my life," explained Trainor.

"He wanted to make a loan, and I told him the matter would have to be referred to the directors. I didn't know—"

He paused, and gazed about with a puzzled frown.

"He called me up," said Seaton, "and told me to be here on a most important matter, one that—"

"Important!" repeated the cashier. "Why, what he wanted was to borrow ten thousand dollars for James Preston!"

Schmidkunz waved his hands frantically.

"Ach, Gott, vat fools ve is! I go. I ain't got no time mit foolishness!"

"We have already turned down Preston's application, haven't we?" asked a director.

"We have," replied Trainor. "He's up to the hilt now with a contract that he can't carry out. Why, this fellow Trent is just a day laborer—so he tells me!"

Several reached for their hats. The clock pointed to five minutes past eleven. There came a knock at the door, and the cashier opened it.

"Ah, gentlemen!" smilingly greeted Trent. "I trust you will pardon my lateness. I am Henry Trent—"

"Vat you mean, you rascal?" interrupted the hardware dealer wrathfully. "Vat you mean bodering us mit tomfoolishness?"

"Tomfoolery?" returned Trent. "You pain me, sir. I am here on a mission of the gravest importance—one that involves the very existence of the city, one—"

"Mr. Trent," cut in Seaton, "will you please state your errand briefly? We are busy men. This bank has no money to loan Mr. Preston."

"I am just as busy as you are, gentlemen. There is a large lumber-pile awaiting my ministrations. If you will be seated and give me five minutes, we can dispose of the business."

"Let's give him the five minutes," suggested Ahearn, "and get the darned thing done with."

Trent nodded gratefully toward the thick-set, florid-featured Irishman. Grudgingly the eight directors seated themselves about the big mahogany table.

"Gentlemen," the young man began, "one of you has said that the First National has no money to lend to Mr. Preston. It may be true that you have no funds for him, but you must have support for what he represents in Hopetown. I am seeking ten thousand dollars, not for an in-

dividual, but for an ideal—an ideal that must be maintained if there is to be a banking business at all. You have no money to lend to Mr. Preston, but you have money to lend to honesty, integrity, and good faith. These qualities are represented in the man for whom I speak—a man who has lived among you and done business with you for more than thirty years; a man who has never broken his word; a man who has lived up to the letter of every agreement that he has ever entered into. Mr. Preston is now engaged in an unfortunate enterprise. Ten thousand dollars will save him from ruin and tide him over to the point where he can see daylight.”

“He ain’t got no security,” cried the impatient Schmidkunz.

“Let him finish,” retorted Ahearn. “It ain’t costing you nothing to hear him, and you might learn to talk English!”

The hardware dealer glared at the Irishman and sank back into his chair with a growl.

“As the gentleman says,” continued Trent, “Mr. Preston has no material security, but he has what is infinitely better. Is there better collateral than character? Am I to understand that a good name of thirty years’ standing is not regarded as highly at this bank as a dubious bit of real estate? The First National is big enough to represent the spirit of Hopetown. Is it the spirit of this city to place dross above honesty? Is it the spirit of this city to crucify integrity and fair-dealing for a few dollars? Mr. Ahearn, you look like a man who has had to work and fight for what you have. You know Preston, probably better than I know him. Isn’t he worthy of help? Hasn’t the character of his life, the example he has set of business squareness, benefited this bank at least to the extent of ten thousand dollars? Do you realize, gentlemen, that the inspiration furnished by the careers of such men as Mr. Preston does a great deal to make banking profitable? I call on you, Mr. Ahearn.”

“Jim Preston’s square, all right,” muttered the director, “but—”

“There can be no buts about this,” interrupted Trent. “This is not an ordinary transaction. It involves the very life of the city. Do you want the young men of Hopetown to feel that honesty is a failure, that it pays no dividends, that it has no standing at this bank? What will be the effect if it goes forth that a man in business

thirty years, with a perfect record of integrity, was allowed to go to ruin and die of a broken heart because a comparatively small loan was refused him? Do you want the youth of Hopetown to hear of it? I appeal to the soul of the First National!”

“This is all very pretty,” said Seaton coldly; “but business is business. May I ask who you are, and why you have interested yourself in the matter?”

“You may,” smiled Trent. “I am a day laborer employed at the Acme addition. I came upon Mr. Preston in the depths of great discouragement—how great you will never know. He seemed at the end of his resources. He had appealed on all sides for help and failed to get it. The mistake he made was going to directors without collateral, instead of to men with character. I told him,” he finished simply, “that I would get him the money he needed.”

“Have you,” asked Seaton, “tried any other bank?”

“No. This is the leading bank in the city. You have profited most by the honesty of Hopetown’s citizens, and should be the first to reward honesty. I come to you, not with a plea, but with an opportunity. Is the soul of the First National in the vaults with the bullion, or is it within you, and you, and you? Ten thousand dollars spells the difference between the life and the death of an ideal in Hopetown. Will you—”

“Trainor,” said Ahearn suddenly, “you have investigated Preston’s affairs, haven’t you?”

“Yes, sir—thoroughly.”

“On this Acme job,” went on the director, “is it possible that he might come through all right with a little help—say the ten thousand he asks for?”

The cashier hesitated.

“It is possible,” he finally admitted; “but the element of risk—”

“Ever hear anything against Preston’s character?” demanded Ahearn.

“No, except that he made a ridiculously low bid on the Acme job.”

“An error of judgment, I presume. Nothing shady, eh?”

“Nothing that I know of.”

“All right!” Ahearn turned to Seaton. “The young man is correct. We can’t let Jim Preston be wrecked for a matter of ten thousand dollars. He has earned that much from the First National by being a

conspicuous example of square dealing for thirty years. I move that the money be loaned to him."

"Without collateral?" asked Seaton.

"I'll furnish it," returned Ahearn. "You shall have my personal indorsement as well as this young fellow's word. I like the way he talks."

"I take a chance on him, too," cried Schmidkunz.

Some discussion followed, but Ahearn and the hardware dealer had their way.

"Very well!" said the chairman. "Trainor, will you notify Mr. Preston that a credit of ten thousand dollars is available for him here?"

The cashier departed. The directors rose and crowded about Trent.

"You sure got a slick tongue," said Schmidkunz. "Vat you says you do?"

"I am a laborer. I am earning four dollars a day carrying lumber at the Acme Building."

"What are you trying to tell us?" scoffed Hughes, the attorney of the board. "Laborers don't talk like that!"

"I used to be a school-teacher," explained Trent, "with an overdeveloped mind and an undeveloped body. I am trying to reestablish the equilibrium."

"Der vat? How you t'ink you like der hardware business? I belief you sell lawn-mowers in der big Sarah Desert!"

"Gentlemen," said Trent, "I thank you in behalf of myself, Mr. Preston, and Hometown—myself, because I am now certain of having my wages paid Saturday; Mr. Preston, because he will probably be able to finish his job; and Hometown, because honesty and integrity have received formal recognition as good collateral at its leading financial institution."

"Thanks for giving us a kick in the ribs," growled Ahearn. "When you get tired of playing around that lumber-pile of yours, drop in and see me."

"Glad to, Mr. Ahearn."

In front of the bank Trent came face to face with a florid youth hurrying into the building.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Arnim Hope.

"Too busy," returned the other, and passed on.

Near the Hope Building he hesitated, stopped thoughtfully for a moment, then returned to the drug-store at the corner.

*(To be continued in the April number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

"Everything all right, Mr. Preston," he telephoned. "The credit is all arranged for. Let the morning's events die from your mind. No, thank you—I'm going back to work."

He walked to the Acme Building. The scowling features of Eagan greeted him.

"Where the hell you been all morning?" the foreman demanded.

"Doing some odds and ends for the boss," lightly returned Trent.

Ten minutes later he was carrying heavy timbers in to the carpenters.

Hope spoke to the uniformed guard standing within the door at the bank.

"That fellow that just went out of here—see him going down the street? Who is he?"

"I don't know, sir. Mr. Trainor can tell you—he's been talking to him."

Hope planted himself in a chair by the cashier's desk.

"Trent, eh? Who is he, and what does he do?"

"I really don't know," was the reply.

"He's a good deal of a mystery to me. He says he's a laborer down at the Acme addition, but I doubt it. Seems to be a man of education, and has a mighty persuasive flow of talk. He tells me he's a stranger in town."

"What did he ask for?"

"Ask for!" The cashier laughed dryly.

"He didn't ask for anything. He demanded ten thousand dollars, and got it."

"I don't follow you. A laborer? What did he put up?"

"Nothing but a line of conversation. He just talked the directors into giving him the money. He said he wanted it for Preston, the contractor on your Acme job. It was the most peculiar—"

Hope seized Trainor roughly by the arm.

"What's that? Do I understand that the First National loaned money to James Preston?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"Cancel it at once!" snarled Arnim.

"Cancel it, or I'll—"

"I'm sorry, but—"

"You'll be sorrier yet if you don't do as I say. If it wasn't for me—"

"I would suggest," interrupted the cashier soothingly, "that you should see Mr. Ahearn. He made a personal affair of it, and you know I can't interfere."



# The Weakest Link

THE STORY OF A MAN, A WOMAN, A CHILD, AND A JUDGE

By Robert Herrick

Author of "The Common Lot," "Together," etc.

THE gray light of a November noon filtered dully through the long windows of the city building and fell upon the brown head of a small boy, who was seated in a large desk chair in one of the rooms. He had been there alone in the office for a long time, though his mother had said, "Just a few minutes, dear!" as she always did. He was engaged in shaping a large hook out of a bit of wire he had discovered, talking to himself meanwhile in the animated fashion of children.

"There!" he exclaimed at last, eying his craftsmanship with the tough wire. "That 'll do, I guess, for the hook. Now for some string!"

He felt in his pockets, then dived into the waste basket and emerged with a short piece of twine, which he fastened to his hook. The string was obviously too short for his purpose, and he looked about the bare room for further resources.

Just then a clerk entered from the next room, where through the open door could be seen the faces of a number of men and some women. The boy looked up eagerly. The clerk smiled at him, winked, and said familiarly:

"Having a good time, bub?"

"Pretty good," the boy replied with dignity. "Say, got any string around here?"

The clerk pointed to the recess where the office twine was kept, and with another smile left the room, closing the door carefully. The boy immediately possessed himself of the ball of twine.

"That 'll reach fine!" he said, tying it to the shorter piece.

Then he made for the window, which after considerable exertion he managed to raise sufficiently to enable him to get his head through. It was obviously too high for comfortable operations, and so after a moment he drew in his head, looked about the room, and discovered a large wooden

box. This he pushed over to the window and perched himself upon it, sighing with satisfaction.

"Now!" he said, cautiously dropping his hook and line over the window-sill. "Now we'll see what's coming to us!"

He played the line in and out skilfully, and jerked it to and fro as if he were making a long cast, all the time continuing his dramatic comment.

"There goes one! Now! Almost hooked him. There—the dub! Oh, gee!"

All that was left of the boy within the office was a pair of fat legs wiggling ecstatically in time with the dangling hook. So absorbed was he in his sport that he did not notice when the door at the other end of the long, narrow room opened again, admitting two men and a woman.

The older of the men, who was slight, with grizzled hair and stooping shoulders, took the chair behind the desk and motioned the others to seats.

"Please sit down," he said in a low voice.

But neither the man nor the woman accepted the invitation. They stood stiffly, one at either end of the broad, littered desk, showing a hostile discontent with the situation by their attitude and their faces. The man's handsome face, especially, had a stubborn, wary expression, as if he suspected some trap. The woman was visibly excited. She clutched nervously at a small bag, and her eyes were fastened upon the man at the desk.

He looked from one to the other, realizing the atmosphere surcharged with the passion of contending wills.

"I have brought you in here," he said, a little wearily, "so that we might talk this matter over by ourselves, quietly." He paused, and his thin lips had a faint, conciliatory smile. "Without the disturbing influence of counsel," he added.

He looked keenly at the man and the woman, to see what impression his mildness had made upon the opposing wills. Apparently it had made none. The man was stroking his mustache guardedly. The woman opened her lips as if to vent some argument.

"It seems to me," the speaker resumed quickly, "that there is collusion in this case." At the man's defiant glance he hastened to say: "I have no proof of it, of course, but I strongly suspect it—as I must always suspect it when a man and a woman of your position, of your evident standing and circumstances, come into my court and attempt to get divorce on such grounds."

His dry, slightly scornful tone made no impression upon the two hostile faces. The judge, clearing his throat, continued more incisively, his eyes resting on the man.

"I cannot believe that a man of your appearance, of your established reputation, would be guilty of striking a woman—and that woman your wife—as she has just testified, uncontroverted."

He paused for explanation, but the man merely stroked his mustache more rapidly.

"Nor that you would desert a woman you had sworn to support and protect, the mother of your child—desert, I mean, not in the legal but in the real sense, leaving her to struggle for bread for herself and the child, leaving her to starve, perhaps."

The man tossed his head angrily, but his lips closed more tightly, as if he were determined that this crafty judge should not trip him into damaging admissions.

"I understand that no claim for alimony is made," the judge observed. "I must infer that, as usual, this matter has been arranged satisfactorily outside of court?"

The woman nodded and waved her hand impatiently, as if to say that money was not the question.

"So it seems that you are not really willing to leave this wife of yours penniless—to desert her in the full sense of the word—as she sets up in her plea?"

"What do you take me for?" the man's eyes answered.

"And yet you are willing to dishonor yourself before the public, before your friends, and that part of the community which still preserves a sense of honor and shame—above all, before your child—by openly acknowledging that you have been cruel to your wife? You are willing to ad-

mit that you have offered her physical violence, so that she is forced to seek relief from your brutality in divorce? You are willing to admit that you have deserted her?"

The man's face, which had changed to sullen protest under this treatment of the facts, said mutely:

"Oh, you know that the cruelty and desertion charge is a form, like another. Every one uses it, because it's the best way out of a bad business with the law such as it is. We have our reasons, of course."

The judge seemed to understand the man's thought. His glance wandered from the faces of the two belligerent beings before him. Settling farther into his chair, he thrust his hands into his pockets thoughtfully.

"It is often done that way," he mused. "The subterfuge is used to cover up deeper causes of disagreement. The husband is willing to be charged with cruelty and desertion, to appear before the world as a liar and a brute, in order that he may break a hated bond—or, in many cases, in order that he may make another bond!"

The judge turned sharply toward the man, who lowered his eyes. After a few moments of painful silence he resumed meditatively.

"Aware as I must be of such collusion as I suspect in this case, nevertheless, like most judges of divorce courts, I usually grant the decree, dissolve the marriage."

At this the man's face brightened with perceptible relief, as if he had safely rounded a dangerous point.

"For," the judge went on more severely, directing his remarks mainly to the man, "divorce seems the least of many evils that might result, would probably result, were I to refuse legal relief. It seems to the court that it is better, as a rule, to accept the deceit at its face value, to be cognizant of fraud, as it were, and to put a legal end to an unchristian, an uncivilized relation, hurtful to man and woman alike."

The judicial tones lapsed. The woman moved, stretched forth a hand, as if she would protest. The man stood more easily. After all, it seemed this prosy judge, after his little talk, would do the usual thing. He peeped furtively at this wife from whom he was just about to be parted—forever.

The judge came out of his muse, and his voice rang sharply.

"At least, when there are no children involved!"

As he spoke his eyes traveled down the room until they fell upon the small boy, who was still absorbed in his angling out of the window.

"But where children enter the case, I believe it is my duty not to accept the subterfuge offered until I have convinced myself to the best of my ability that there is no other resort—that divorce would be best for the child, too."

He pointed to the boy. The man and the woman, turning their heads, followed the direction of his finger. The man's face showed surprise.

"In your case there is a child," the judge said softly. "I had his mother bring him to my chambers in order that I might see his side of the case. A nice lad! He has not suffered—yet."

The eyes of the man and the woman still rested upon their child.

"Think," the judge resumed, in his gently musing tone, "what this act of yours must mean to him—now and forever after throughout his life! Put yourselves, for once, entirely to one side and think of *him*—the creature you have made to be—yours! Think what it will mean to him to be fatherless or motherless—more probably without either father or mother. Oh, I know you mean to do your best to make it up to him, but that is what it must amount to in the end. He must be handed over to others—to outsiders—to be cared for. Probably he will be sent away to boarding-school—at his age! He must know why, and the other boys will know why, and he will know that they know why he is there. So he will grow up without real parents. Naturally, I suppose, you have arranged so that each of you will have him for a few weeks now and then. Kind acquaintances! But he will know that he is really an orphan, and that it is not death that has deprived him of his parents, but the weakness of those parents, who should have protected his weakness with their strength."

The judge paused, then turned to the man directly.

"You had a home? Yes! Your father and mother may have quarreled—may have seen their mistake as plainly as you think you see yours. It may not have been a good home always; but they managed to stick to their job somehow. And so their child had something solid beneath his feet

as he grew to manhood. You knew both your parents!"

During this little homily the man and the woman fidgeted. The woman kept her eyes upon the child, but the man looked hard at the judge, and his eyes spoke fiercely. But the judge kept on, more swiftly now.

"Can't you—the man—put yourself aside for him? Forget that other—possibility! For the sake of your son, forget yourself for a few years at least. Can't you both find something in yourselves to rest upon, to abide by, other than your own desires—for *his* sake?"

The woman's face paled.

"Judge," the man interrupted huskily, "I—I—"

"One moment, please!"

The judge raised his hand.

"Your life is half spent, but his is almost all unspent. What, then, will you do for him? Will you give him money, or will you give the strength of your right hand now? It's a chain you two have made—a chain of three, made by your wills and your desires. You have been pulling at that chain for years, I suppose; but now you are trying to pull it apart, and it will break—where? At the weakest link—at him!"

And rising from his chair he pointed to the boy with his trembling hand.

"There is the weakest link—always!"

## II

THE boy had reached a critical moment in his operations and was totally absorbed, hauling in his long line, which was apparently weighted with a catch. In his excitement he had ceased to talk to himself.

As the judge spoke his concluding words, there bobbed into sight above the window-ledge a man's stiff hat, securely hooked to the curved wire. Involuntarily the three spectators smiled, softening the tense expression of their faces.

The boy, in his eagerness to land his catch, pushed too hard on the box on which he was standing, and fell to the floor with a clatter, still clutching hat and hook. He picked himself up, and his attention was arrested by the grown people. There was a sharp inquiry in his eyes, as if for a moment he was puzzled by this combination of persons. Then, dropping hat and fish-line upon the floor, he ran forward.

"Dad!" he cried.

Again he paused for a moment, swiftly examining the faces of all three with a mature consideration in his eyes; but soon, with a joyous shout, he dismissed his doubts.

"Dad! Where did you come from?"

The man put out his hand. The boy, seizing it with a laugh, swung himself upon his father's shoulder. Then, putting out a hand to steady himself, he caught hold of his mother's arm. It was the instinctive act of the playful small animal—full of grace and the exuberant good-will of youth. He slipped down a bit and swung, like an athlete on the rings, between his father and his mother.

The judge smiled and picked up the hat from the floor.

"Good fishing, sonny?" he inquired.

The boy glanced at him roguishly.

"You bet! He looked mad, though!"

The boy was singularly like both his parents, with the handsome blond head of his father and the mouth and the eyes of his mother. From the judge he looked to his mother, then to his father, with that wise, mature expression which had come into his eyes at the first sight of the three.

"Judge!" the man muttered huskily.

But the judge said to the woman, as if he had not heard the man's voice:

"I shall not grant your decree to-day. I shall hold it for six months—for six months. Then you may both come back here with him—with *him*, remember!" He patted the boy's head. "And we will see what to do next."

He crossed the room briskly and opened the door into the hall, holding it wide for the three to pass out.

"Remember," he whispered to the man, pointing to the boy, "the weakest link!"

With bewildered faces, husband and wife slowly left the judge's chambers. The boy, still holding to a hand of each parent, skipped friskily between them.

After their departure the judge stood by his desk for a few moments, a smile upon his musing face. He was disturbed by the angry voice of an irritated citizen in parley with the clerk. The stranger made his way into the office, loudly demanding his hat. The judge took the hat from his desk and courteously handed it to the irate owner, the smile still lingering on his face.

"You seem to think it was a good joke!" stormed the citizen.

"Yes," said the judge softly; "at least, a useful one!"

### III

THE man, the woman, and the child between them got as far as the nearest street-corner, and there stood irresolutely in the crowd of passers-by. The man pulled out his watch, as if calculating an appointment.

"Are you tired, mother?" the boy asked gently. "We'd better ride home." Turning to his father with a little nod of masculine competence, he observed: "Mother looks pretty tired, dad."

The man beckoned to a cab across the street, and when the carriage drew up at the curb he held open the door for the woman to enter. She gathered her coat about her with a frigid care lest it should touch the man, and stepped in.

"You're coming, too, dad?" the boy said tentatively, still holding the man's hand in a tight grip.

The man got into the cab. Nothing was said for a time. Husband and wife drew away into the corners of the seat and stared out of their respective windows.

"Gee!" the boy exclaimed once, as a heavy truck shot past the carriage. "That was a close shave, wasn't it?"

Neither parent paid heed to him, and the boy looked at them again with the puzzled, mature expression in his keen little eyes. Thereafter he was silent.

When the carriage stopped before a large, dark house, the boy waited for his father to get out. Then he took the man's hand again, as if he had been turning matters over and had determined that this elusive parent should not give him the slip. The woman swept up the steps and into the house, leaving the man and the boy to follow as they would.

The man, once within the door of his abandoned home, stood irresolute; but the boy, taking his hat and coat from him, hung them up in the empty closet. Then the child ran out to the dining-room, where he shouted breathlessly to the servant:

"Father's home, Margaret! Set two more places! I'm going to sit up for dinner," he added with a tone of conscious dignity.

It was another of those dreary meals in this cold, silent house, in which the gloom of human failure seemed to have settled with the chill of the tomb. The servant,



with a discreet reserve upon her tight lips which spoke more plainly than words, came and went about the table.

Only the boy ignored the situation utterly; or perhaps he felt the social responsibility neglected by his parents. It had fallen upon him to supply human warmth for all the cold in the atmosphere, and he did his best. Fishing became his theme.

"Do you go fishing, dad," he asked, "when you are away?"

"Sometimes."

"Do you catch many big fellows?"

"That depends."

"Could you take me?"

"Yes—the next time I go, son!"

"And mother?"

The woman's lips relaxed in a cold smile.

Thus the courses dragged on and off. The man felt in his pocket for a cigar, then unconsciously got up and looked in the corner of the sideboard, where the cigar-box used to be kept. The woman spoke for the first time.

"They aren't there," she said coldly, as if she wished him to know that from this house, which was to be wholly hers, every trace of him had been removed.

He made a gesture of indifference and sat down again.

"I'll get you a pipe, dad," the boy suggested hospitably. "I know where they are, in the attic."

Slipping from his seat, he was off up the stairs, his feet padding rapidly.

"I suppose the little monkey has been trying 'em," the man volunteered.

"He's a male," the woman snapped, as if that fact of sex alone were sufficient to account for precocious vice.

Then husband and wife, left alone for the first time in many months, looked at each other furtively across the table.

"Well," he said, a slight smile at the irony of the situation creeping, against his will, over his handsome features.

The last time they had dined together—it was well not to revive that murky memory! And this was hardly the way he had expected to celebrate this day. The humor of the thought broadened his foolish smile, which exasperated the woman.

"I don't understand what that judge means!" she exploded in a high key. "He can't do things that way. I'll see my lawyers about it to-morrow."

At this fatally familiar phrase the man shrugged his shoulders.

"It means another six months like the last six, unless—" He hesitated a moment, and then went on with false nonchalance: "Unless you will be good enough to go somewhere, as I suggested in the first place—one of those places in the West—"

"Nevada!" she exclaimed. "Out there away from my friends—in that sneaking fashion—never!"

"Then it's another six months," the man said, crossing his legs with an air of infinite patience. "If you can wait, I suppose I can stand it."

"I can wait. Haven't I waited ten long years? But if *she* won't let you wait—"

A dull red glow suffused the man's face, and his eyes flashed.

"Will you be good enough—"

"Of course it will be hard for *her*!"

This was her manner of goading him into one of those outbursts of fury for which he would suffer shame afterward. He had never struck her, as the judge knew, but it seemed as if the time would come when he could no longer control himself. The two glared, afraid to speak.

"Here, dad!" The boy came running, breathless. "The big one you like best! And here's some tobacco I found, too!"

He gave his father the pipe and tobacco in a glow of joy at being able to satisfy the wants of this distinguished stranger.

The man filled his pipe with the stale tobacco. The belligerent glances of the two softened in the presence of the child. The woman rose wearily from the table and left the room, while the father lingered, smoking his pipe and talking with the boy, who prosecuted his theme of fishing.

"You'll take me fishing soon, dad?"

"Just as soon as I can get away from business."

"Gee, won't that be swell?" He ran out to tell the maid. "Say, Margaret, my father is going to take me fishing with him—real fishing!"

#### IV

PRESENTLY the man strolled into the library. The room had a cheerless, unfamiliar air. All his books had been removed with his other possessions, and the usual clutter of papers and pamphlets about the reading-lamp had been cleared away. Even the curtains had been taken down, as if for immediate departure. The room was bare and bleak—like the woman, dressed all in black, who sat staring out into the

dark street. Why had she affected that ugly black, as if there had been a death in the family?

"Well," he began, in a tone distinctly conciliatory, puffing hard at his pipe, "we must make the best of it."

She turned her head sharply, and with the light falling on her face he saw how pale she was, how worn. In the heat of battle in the court-room he had not noticed how ill she was looking.

"It is easy enough for you to make the best of it!" she sneered.

Her face began to work. It was a premonition of the coming storm—one of those hysterical rages that submerged him in a welter of unreason, in which he fought for air as one might in the swirl of a turgid wave. His usual refuge was flight, but this time he stayed.

"Another six months of this false position, living here while you—oh, I was a fool to let them persuade me to change the charge to 'desertion and cruelty,' so as to help cover things up—to make it easier for you!"

The man closed the door into the hall so that the boy might not overhear what was to come.

"If the judge had known the truth, he wouldn't have done this. There would have been no delay!"

"Well, you can bring another suit and make what charges you wish," he suggested defiantly.

"I will! I'll show you up to the world! I'll—I'll—"

He hated emotion, he hated fuss. The judge was an ass if he thought any man could live with this hysterical creature. His self-control was fast giving away under the beat of the storm. He made for the door.

"I see," he said quietly, "that I made a mistake in coming here. It was for the boy's sake. He couldn't understand, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings."

"If you cared for him, this would never have been!"

He looked at her fiercely. At sight of her haggard face, still working nervously, his anger suddenly died out. For the first time he saw it as she saw it—how it had been for her all these months while they were waiting for the divorce, how hate and shame and despair had preyed upon her until she was no longer herself, but some wild creature. For the first time he could put himself quite outside the situation, as

the judge said, and it made him wonderfully calm.

"Louise," he said, standing still before her, "don't! It only makes it worse!"

She looked at him out of hating eyes, but was quiet. A burst of joyous laughter came through the closed door from the hall.

"Heh, there! Come on up!" cried the quick, staccato tones of the boy.

"He's a chatty little chap," the man muttered.

"He'll miss you now more than ever," the woman said, collapsing into a chair. "He thinks you have been away on a journey—like the other times. He won't understand your leaving again so soon. Oh!" A sob shook her. "He will have to be told now!"

It seemed that she, too, was suffering more for the child than for herself.

There were fresh squeals of laughter outside, and a cry from the maid:

"Oh, Master Ned!"

The man opened the door into the hall and revealed the cause of the disturbance. The boy had stolen up to the landing on the stairs when the maid had gone to light the lamp below, and had hooked her deftly by the hair with his curved wire, which he had carefully preserved. The man walked over and unhooked the giggling maid.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, examining the piece of bent wire.

"Made it while I was waiting for you and mother in that old man's room," the boy explained proudly.

The man got his hat and coat. When he returned to the library, the woman was crying softly. The boy, who had followed his father, looked from one to the other anxiously. His face, just now so childishly merry, had become suddenly grave.

"You're going away?" he said.

"I'll be back again. I'll see you soon, sonny," the man stammered.

"It was a long while the last time," the boy observed with a sigh. "Why—"

Then he paused, as if he realized the hopelessness of understanding these queer grown-ups.

"My room isn't ready for me," the man said desperately.

"Then you can sleep with me!" As the man hesitated, the boy grasped the suggestion more firmly. "There's lots of room. Goody! Goody!"

The man looked questioningly at the woman.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked in a low voice.

"As you like," she murmured, turning away her miserable face.

The boy had grabbed the hat and coat from his father's hands and chucked them out into the hall.

"Won't I rough-house you in the morning? Oh, my!" he reflected gleefully.

"Well, for the night, then," the man muttered, rumpling the boy's hair.

## V

BUT the child's grip did not relax the next day, nor the next. It seemed impossible that the three should go on living in that cold house, the scene of so much disaster; but no social situation is utterly intolerable where one person exerts himself consistently to make it tolerable. In this household it was the boy who seemed to take upon himself the obligation to make it possible. He was full of devices.

At breakfast, some weeks after the return of the man, the boy's round, shiny face gleamed across the broad table opposite his father. At this matutinal hour he was specially chatty, like a brisk robin. He always allowed his father to immerse himself in the newspaper for a few moments, then drew him out with a line of skilful questions. This time, after grave meditation, he observed:

"Dad, I don't think mother is well."

"Why?"

"Because she cries too much, and she stays in bed too much," he said firmly.

His tone was grave, as if the two men of the family must consult together in regard to the weaker member.

"And what would you do for her, son?" asked the man, struck by the boy's whimsical seriousness.

"I don't know. Can't *you* do something, dad?"

"I'll think about it," the man said.

After that he dawdled about the room, smoking his pipe, until his wife appeared, fretful, worn. Her look expressed surprise at his presence at this hour.

"Ned doesn't seem to think you are quite well," he remarked casually. "Why don't you go South and get a change? It might make you more fit."

"I expected to be out of this awful place before this, but now—" She sighed wearily.

"I'll look after Ned."

"Leave him—to you?" she flashed. "No, thanks!"

"Let's all go," the boy suggested.

At the awkward pause which followed between the elders, he remarked, as if announcing a much meditated truth:

"I think famblies"—he had always had trouble with this word—"famblies should keep together and stay in one place. Don't you, dad?"

He appealed to the man as the proper vessel of generalized wisdom.

"I suppose so, son!"

A frosty smile crept over the woman's face. The man moved uneasily beneath the irony implied in that smile, then said suddenly:

"Suppose we all go South? I think I can get away. Business is pretty dull."

"Won't that be swell?" the boy remarked ecstatically. "No school—say! Oh, my!"

He looked breathlessly at his mother for her decision. The woman glanced irresolutely at the man.

"Will your—engagements—permit?" she asked.

"I can arrange all my—engagements," he replied with a smile.

"There'll be real fishing, won't there?" the boy put in. "I'll catch a whale for you, mother—you bet!"

He danced around the table, put his arms about his mother's neck, and mauled her boy fashion.

"You'll get better," he said. "We'll take you fishing with us—you can do the cooking!"

The man and the woman laughed. It did not seem that thus far the boy was the weakest link in the chain of three.

## VI

LIFE, grinding after its impersonal manner, shaped matters for these three in a way that neither man nor woman had designed. In due time it fashioned its own crisis for them out of the multifarious detail of its other activities. It was not a sentimental but a business crisis.

Again the family made its appearance in court. It was a pleasant summer day, but very little of the fragrant, sunny air got into the dingy room where the judge sat all day long listening to the contentions of men. His brows were puckered in lines of weary thought while he tried to solve the insoluble riddles of conduct and justice.

If he recognized the group of three in the rear of the court-room, waiting their turn, he made no sign. The man sat stolidly, his head bent slightly forward, as if with the weight of care. His handsome face had grown thin and pale, and he failed to caress his mustache in the confident way he once had. At his side sat his wife, still dressed in plain black, with serene face. She was talking to the boy, who seemed deeply interested in the spectacle of the court.

At last the man's name was called, and he went forward. Presently the judge, gathering up the papers in the case, beckoned to the woman and the child, and ushered the three into his private office. The boy went at once to the window and gazed speculatively into the street.

"So," the judge said, casting his eyes over the papers, "you have been unfortunate in your affairs?"

"Failed, judge!" the man replied grimly.

The judge looked thoughtfully at the crestfallen, drooping man before him, then at the woman.

"Everything seems to have gone wrong with me," the man muttered.

"I don't believe that," the judge said with a little smile.

"I'm bankrupt!"

"Many a man has failed and started in again—to win!"

"That's what I tell him," said the woman softly.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," the man agreed wearily. "But—"

"Don't lose your courage—that's all!"

"So I say, judge," the woman interposed again. "He must not do that. And there's no reason why he should—everything's ahead!"

She moved a little nearer her husband. The judge looked at the two keenly from beneath his glasses.

"It will depend on you," he said to the woman.

"I know!"

She smiled back at him confidently.

"We are going to begin again, judge," she said with a blush.

"That's the only way—to begin all over."

He turned to the boy, who had grown weary of his former fishing-ground and had come to join the others.

"How's fishing, sonny?" he inquired.

"That kind of fishing's no good," the boy said with the large disdain of real experience; "but pretty soon we're going to the country to live—aren't we, father? And I'll have a boy dog and a girl dog, and then there'll be puppies. I'll give you one, if you like."

"Thanks!" the judge replied, laughing.

"Shall I keep him here?"

"I've always wanted to live in the country," the boy said, as if all the accidents of life merely presented to him delightful solutions. "In the country, where things grow, you know!"

"Yes," the judge agreed, patting his head; "boys and puppies—and other things."

He looked at the three for a moment. Then, as he signed the papers, he said to the man:

"If you don't lose your nerve, the chain will hold."

It was plain enough now who was the weakest link.

"It will!" said the woman.

And the three went out of the judge's room together.

#### A LEAVE-TAKING

AFTER all we did and said,  
Can it be our love is dead?  
Sweetheart, can it be that this is  
Then the end of all our kisses?

Ah, the bitterest of the sorrow,  
Not the lack of love to-morrow—  
Love, they say, can never last;  
But that it should end this way  
Makes a mock of yesterday,  
Robs all sweetness from the past!

Andrew McIver Adams



# Hearsay Evidence

## HOW TONZO, LOVER OF DOGS, LEARNED THE TRUTH ABOUT THE POINIER MURDER

By William Hamilton Osborne

THE Poinier place was dark and still, that sweltering night, as Patrolman Dorety approached it on his pussy-footed rounds. It had been dark and still like this for five nights now. It was clear that the house was closed. Poinier's young wife, thought Dorety, had gone away to rest—and wisely, too, for the heat was killing. The whole of Trelawney Road was dark and still; too dark and still, thought Dorety.

For an instant only did he pause at the high iron gateway of the Poinier place. It was his nightly habit to stop there, to peer into the grounds, to make sure that all was well. To-night, as always, he blew gently on his whistle, aiming the sound of it toward the old stone house. Poinier's young wife was left alone too often on dark nights. It had become a custom with Dan Dorety to make his protective presence known to her; to let her know, as he was passing, that she had naught to fear.

Sometimes, indeed, as he had glanced through the wrought-iron gate on such occasions, he was rewarded by the grateful flash of a white hand at a window, sometimes by the answering flicker of an electric bulb. Poinier's young wife knew that Dan Dorety understood her hard case with her husband—Poinier, the degenerate scion of a decadent line; a man whose passion ever was another woman, and another, and another.

But it was not only sympathy with Poinier's wife that led Dan Dorety to stop before that gate at night. He had another and a lighter motive. He wanted to exchange challenges with another sort of watchman—a watchman ever on the job.

The Poinier house was set in the center of a huge square lawn surrounded by a high stone wall. For months past, from dusk at

night to long after dawn, a special sentinel had patrolled this lawn. He was on guard now—he was very much on guard. With a snarl of warning he tore across the grounds. In an ecstasy of fury he charged the high iron gate.

Instinctively Dan Dorety drew back; instinctively he threw himself into an attitude of defense, his night-stick rampant. The savagery of this fierce beast never failed to thrill Dan Dorety. It did more—it frightened him as well.

This animal was Wolf, police dog *par excellence*. He was called police dog, reasoned Dorety, for the same reason that other canines were called bird dogs, stag hounds, rat terriers. What Wolf would do to a policeman, if he had the chance, was good and plenty, so it seemed to Dorety.

Dorety knew this dog. He knew his pedigree. The animal had been born and bred in the immediate neighborhood. Wolf was one of the highly trained products of the Carlisle Kennels, a dog-farm just across the bridge and a little way down Trelawney Road. After an attempted robbery, one night, Poinier had bought the dog of Carlisle. Attempts at robbery immediately fell off. So did all attempts, legitimate or otherwise, to effect an entrance to the Poinier grounds.

Wolf, it is true, was prone to err, but on the safe side always. Twice had Poinier himself been knocked down by his faithful guardian, and stood over for an hour or so, until rescue was at hand.

Dan Dorety snarled back genially at Wolf and went his way. He swung jauntily across the bridge and down Trelawney Road. He heard the dog-farm long before he reached it. Something was doing at the kennels, thought Dan Dorety. The yelps were wild and multitudinous.

Dorety quickened his pace. The kennels always entertained him—they were calling to him now.

There was an arc-light in the road before the dog-farm, and as Dorety came within hailing distance, he saw what caused the tumult. The boy was out skylarking with the dogs. This happened now and then at night.

This reckless hilarity meant one thing, and only one. The proprietor of the kennels had not come home; he was nowhere about the place. Carlisle brooked no tomfoolery, not even in a dog. The cat was now away, the mice were at play.

Carlisle's house was of a piece with the rest of the dwellings on Trelawney Road. It had seen better days. There was a doorway, overgrown with grass and shrubbery, hedged in by a picket fence. Inside the yard pandemonium held sway—a bewildering medley of canine tails and tongues and teeth, flashes of brown bodies in the air, wild yelps.

In the mathematical center of this palpitating mass of dog there was a single, slender human being. This was the boy, Tonzo by name. Dorety knew Tonzo—knew him well and liked him well; and the boy liked Dorety.

Tonzo was thin and dark and swarthy. To-night, as on other sweltering nights, he was bared to the waist. His head was black with unkempt hair, his face and body toned with tan. He was fifteen, perhaps, or a little more.

He was a dog-trainer of the first magnitude, this boy. He had grown up in Carlisle's kennels. He was a far better man with dogs than was Carlisle himself. He had come honestly by his instinct. Duval, his father, had been one of Carlisle's trainers in his time—a drunken trainer, but a good one. This trainer's wife had died in child-birth. Carlisle's wife, childless herself, had mothered their offspring; and Duval, the trainer, had subsequently drunk himself to death. When Duval died he died among the dogs; they were his companions to the end.

The dogs sensed Dorety's approach long before his arrival. They knew his tread along the road. They would have rushed the picket fence to greet him, but they didn't get the chance. Dorety saw the boy stretch out his hypnotic hand above them, and heard him bark out a word or two. The dogs fell back.

They fell back in formation. Tonzo had them trained to come to rest in groups. The chows squatted on their haunches by themselves; the Belgian police dogs lay with their noses between their fore feet; the bulls grinned inanely at one another in their corner.

Dorety laid a hand upon the picket fence. The boy crept to the fence in a propitiating way, the arc-light strong upon his dark features. Fawningly he placed timid finger-tips upon the sleeve of Dorety's uniform.

"Did you see Wolf?" anxiously queried the boy.

"Ah!" said Dorety, in answer. "I saw Wolf, and Wolf saw me. Wolf was feeling fine."

The boy searched the policeman's face with quick, eager glance, to make sure that Dorety was telling the truth. Then he broke into a wide, silent, laughing smile, baring all his teeth.

He just stood there, silently gloating over the good news that his friend Wolf was feeling fine.

"I fed him supper," said the boy at length. "You see there's no one home but Wolf."

"Supper!" echoed Dan Dorety. "You didn't give him quite enough, my boy. When I had my confab with him, he was looking for another meal. What do you want for that rascal of an Irish terrier over there?"

"Larry!" called the boy.

Larry darted to the boy's side, placed his feet on the top rail of the picket fence, and permitted Dorety to tickle him behind the ears.

"What do you want for him?" persisted Dorety.

The boy placed a protecting arm about the dog's neck, cuddled up to him, and whispered soft nothings in his ear.

"Larry's not for sale," he said, almost defiantly.

"Go on with you!" retorted Dorety. "So far as you're concerned, there's none of them for sale. I'll see Carlisle."

Tonzo glanced fearfully about him, and peered up and down the road.

"He's not here yet," the boy faltered. "He hasn't come."

The thought of Carlisle stirred him, however, to another memory, as Dorety could see. His timid, sensitive fingers pressed into Dorety's forearm.

"You've seen Connie," the boy went on wistfully. "Tell me about Connie and her dogs."

Connie, it seemed, was Carlisle's wife, and the boy's foster-mother. She was a homely, decent, kindly woman; young and happy, too, when Carlisle left her to herself. For some reason best known to herself, she had gone upon the stage. She traveled with a troupe of dogs—"Constance Carlisle's Canines." They were not a great success. The dogs did their best, but Carlisle's wife had no dramatic instinct—an essential even in the case of dogs. She lacked stage presence, too, and her business ability was nil.

She played the small-time circuits that radiated from New York. Dan Dorety had seen her act just once, and he had told Tonzo about it. The boy could never hear enough; but this time Dan only shook his head.

"I got no time to-night," he said. "I'll tell you to-morrow night."

He proceeded on his way. He had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when he heard a pistol-shot—or what he took to be a pistol-shot. His instinct warned him that it was a pistol-shot. His better judgment told him it was nothing but the back-fire of a motor-car. The explosion was distant, and behind him.

Dorety swung out into the middle of the thoroughfare and glanced up and down, both ways. Straight as an arrow lies Trelawney Road. There was no crossroad for a mile, at any rate. Dan saw no headlights, no tail-lights, of any motor-car. Trelawney Road was unpaved, rutty, and but little traveled. Nevertheless, Dorety relied upon his experience rather than upon his instinct, and concluded that the sound that he had heard was the back-fire of a motor-car.

He had a box to pull some distance down the road. He reached the box and pulled it. Then he retraced his steps, striding on swiftly through the hot night; for his instinct was doing battle with his judgment, and telling him that the explosion was a pistol-shot. The thing worried him exceedingly; something told him things were wrong.

When he reached Carlisle's Kennels once again, he found the owner there with Tonzo. Carlisle had at length come home, and was breaking up the little canine holiday. Piling oath upon oath, he laid about him

with a loose fence paling; without mercy, he kicked and cuffed the dogs to their kennels. As he did so, one of the chows—a savage blue—turned upon him murderously. Carlisle was quick. The blue chow caught the toe of Carlisle's foot upon its jaw. The swing was vicious. The chow surrendered, yelped with pain, and made off to its kennel.

Once the dogs had been disposed of, Carlisle swung upon the boy.

"You get out of here to bed, quick!" he bellowed.

Then Carlisle saw Dan Dorety. His frenzy passed; he sobered.

"Oh, hello, Dorety!" he said.

Once more Dorety leaned against the picket fence.

"Did any of you hear a pistol-shot?" he asked.

"I heard something," said Carlisle, "a while back; but I took it for the blow-out of a hundred-dollar tire."

"It attracted your attention?" queried Dorety.

"I heard it," said Carlisle.

He approached the picket fence and held out a friendly hand. Dorety shook hands, but with reluctance. He didn't like Carlisle. He had never liked Carlisle. He knew Carlisle as a bully. He knew him as a crooked gambler. He believed him to be a smuggler of doubtful alcoholic concoctions. He had been told that Carlisle beat his wife.

Just now it was clear that Carlisle had been drinking. The odor of fresh liquor was upon him, and his eyes were blood-shot.

"How's tricks, Dorety?" he asked of the policeman.

Dorety didn't answer at once. He was watching the boy. Tonzo, taking advantage of Carlisle's inattention, stole swiftly toward the gate.

"Here, you!" cried Carlisle, taking after him. "Come back here, you whelp!"

The boy came back again, frightened, whimpering.

"I tell you," he wailed frantically, "I tell you that I've got to go to Wolf. I heard him call for me. I tell you Wolf is calling now."

Dorety held up his hand for silence. There was the faint baying of a dog in the distance. The moon was rising. Carlisle pointed to it.

"The boy is nutty," he said.

Tonzo crept, cringing, to Dan Dorety.

"It's Wolf. He's calling for me," he cried.

Carlisle charged down upon the boy, caught him, and cuffed him as he had cuffed the dogs.

"You get to bed!" he shouted.

Sobbing, the boy trailed off toward the house.

"Brat gives me more trouble than he's worth," grunted Carlisle.

"I've got to go," said Dan Dorety, moving off.

"So-long, then," said Carlisle.

"So-long," said Dan, and went.

## II

HE crossed the bridge. He crept noiselessly upon the Poinier place once more. Reaching the gateway, he blew gently on his whistle. There were no answering snarls; there was no four-footed rush; there was no sound. The place was still as death—too still.

"Glory be!" cried Dan Dorety softly to himself.

The front door of the house was standing open; a flare of yellow light was flashing out upon the porch. Somebody was inside the house—that much was clear. Dorety peered for a moment—a thoughtful, careful moment—through the iron gate. He blew once more upon his whistle, a shade more loudly this time; but still there was no response from Wolf or from anybody else.

Dorety laid his hand upon the gate latch, and lifted it. Under his pressure the gate moved open noiselessly. Standing outside, he closed it again with a clang—but with no result.

Dorety drew his gun from its holster, and gripped his night-stick firmly in his hand. Swinging the gate wide open, he crept warily into the grounds—watching breathlessly for the onslaught of the dog. He was genuinely afraid that at any instant Wolf might charge him.

For the rest, he was only mildly apprehensive. It was clear to Dorety that some one who had the right to enter was now within the house.

As he approached the mansion, he became aware that a room upon the second floor was lighted—a room whose shades, however, had been tightly drawn. This room was Poinier's. Dorety's tension was relieved. It was plain now that Poinier had

come home for some unknown reason, possibly to spend the night.

Dorety pressed on up the porch steps. The hall electrician was switched on full. Dorety tiptoed across the porch, and stood for a moment at the threshold, just within the open door. He listened carefully, but heard no sound.

He tapped three times with the brass knocker on the door. The sound of it reverberated through the house. He aimed his whistle in the direction of the stairway and blew a blast upon it.

"It's Patrolman Dorety!" he cried.

There was no response. Warily still, but still not apprehensive, Dorety entered the broad, old-fashioned hall. He called Poinier by name. Silence.

With his hand on the trigger of his gun, Dorety crept up the broad, old-fashioned stairs. On the floor in Poinier's bedroom there lay a man, face down. It was Poinier.

Poinier was dead—stone dead. There was a bullet-hole between his eyes. There were no marks of powder on his face. Dorety concluded swiftly that murder had been done. He looked about him, but he found no gun.

At that point his immediate investigation ceased. He was a patrolman, and this job was not for him. He called up headquarters and got the detective bureau on the wire. The bureau switched Dorety to a private line, and the patrolman got the chief at his house.

"All right, Dan!" said the chief. "Keep everything as it is. I'll be with you in less than half an hour."

Dorety seated himself upon the top step of the porch, with one eye cocked upon the open doorway, with one ear toward the center of the town. In about fifteen minutes he heard the roar of the chief's eight-cylinder car. Dorety was at the gateway to receive him. On the way to the house he told him all he knew. The chief tiptoed carefully across the porch.

"This open door?" he queried.

"Just as it was," said Dorety. "I haven't touched a thing."

The chief stole softly up the stairs. Half-way to the landing he stopped short, whipped out a clean handkerchief, and picked up something from a shadowed corner. It was the gun.

"Gimme a flash," curtly commanded the chief.



Dorety brought his electric torch to bear upon the find.

"Thirty-eight caliber," commented his superior.

He wrapped the gun up tenderly and placed it in the side pocket of his coat. He did this after pointing out to Dorety that one chamber had been fired, and that the odor of fresh powder was strong upon the weapon.

"There's something else here," said the chief.

He seized Dan's torch and flashed it upon one of the treads of the stairway. He was quite right. There was something there.

"A boy's hand!" whispered the chief. "A bloody print!"

Dorety scrutinized the stain.

"Not a boy's hand," he returned. "It's a dog's foot, chief—a dog."

"There is a dog, then?" queried his superior.

Dorety told the chief of Wolf. The chief crept slowly up the stairs, examining each tread as he went along.

"The beast did this coming down," he said. "He took about six steps at a bound. He was scared to death. He was trying to get away."

"Scared nothing!" returned Dorety. "Trying to get away from nothing! That dog don't scare, and he don't try to get away."

"Forget him," said the chief. "Let's have a look at the master of the house."

It was clear that Poinier, the master of the house, had come home with a definite purpose in view. Upon his bed there lay a huge suit-case, made of sole leather. It was partially packed with Poinier's clothing. The room was in disorder. A straight-backed chair had been jerked over on its side. A small but heavy center table was awry.

"He was surprised," commented the detective. "There may have been a fight."

Poinier had divested himself of his coat and waistcoat, both of which were hanging from the foot of the bed. Underneath them, on the floor, was a long, handsome leather wallet, empty. Beside it were other things—the first a letter, postmarked at Sandyside two days before, and addressed to Poinier at his New York office in the handwriting of a woman. The second was a small railroad envelope; and that was all. The railroad envelope contained through

tickets from New York to Quebec—two of them—and a single coupon for a Pullman drawing-room—a drawing-room upon a midnight train.

The woman's letter was of more importance. The chief scanned it. He showed this passage to Dorety:

I've found out why you had me sign those papers. I've found out what you're going to do with all that money. I have learned the truth. I could kill you.

The chief detective chuckled.

"Not only 'could'—I'll stake my bottom dollar that she did!" he said.

He showed Dorety the signature upon the letter—"Marion Poinier."

"Not in ten thousand years!" cried Dorety. "That little lady wouldn't harm a flea!"

"Not unless she could catch one," grinned the chief. "It so happens that here is one she caught." He jerked his head across the hall. "Whose room is that?" he queried.

"It's hers," said Dorety.

"You know the layout pretty well!" commented the detective.

Dorety led the way into Mrs. Poinier's room and switched on the lights. The chief took one comprehensive glance about the apartment; then he pounced upon a dainty waste-paper basket that was tucked under the dressing-table. From it he took a discarded newspaper.

"Mrs. Poinier," remarked Dorety, "hasn't been home for near a week."

"This last edition of this evening's *Chronicle*," smiled the chief, "says to me that she's been inside this room some time in the last five hours. What have you got to say to that?"

"I got to say," said Dorety, "that Poinier chuckled it there himself."

"He may have chuckled it there," returned the chief; "but before he did that he took care to muss it up and tuck it into the inside of a woman's bag. No man ever folds a paper up like that."

The chief opened the two drawers of the dressing-table. Out of the second one he took another gun—a revolver, nickel-plated.

"It's a thirty-two," he said. "The lady wasn't afraid of these things, anyway."

"Did she use it?" queried Dorety.

"She didn't need to use it," said the chief. "She grabbed Poinier's gun away from him."

"Shot him square through the head,"

commented Dorety, "and robbed him afterward!"

"You go too far," returned the chief. "She didn't rob him. She claims that money as her own, Dan," he went on; "there's no escape. She says in her letter she could kill him, and it looks like she had good cause to kill him. She took pains to track him here; she found him, and she killed him. What more can any fair man want? Now let's reckon up this dog."

### III

As they reached the front door, there was a quick, stealthy movement somewhere in the shadows on the porch. Dorety flashed his electric torch into a dark corner; and there they found the boy Tonzo, clinging to the railing, cowering, quivering and quaking as with cold.

The instant he saw that it was Dorety, the boy clutched the patrolman by the sleeve.

"Come!" pleaded the boy. "Come! It's Wolf—he's shot!"

"Where is this Wolf?" demanded the chief. "Hold on—just wait a bit."

With Dorety's torch he went back into the house, and picked up the mark of the bloody paws where they had abandoned them in their preliminary search. He traced them down the porch steps and along a flagstone pathway leading to the rear.

"The darned dog," mused the chief, "has danced all around here on these stones!"

"On his hind feet," said Dorety. "Somebody was trying to fight him off—somebody that he'd followed down the stairs."

The chief stopped in his tracks.

"Bring that boy here," he commanded.

The boy crept up, fearfully.

"Dorety," queried the chief, "you know this boy?"

"I know him very well," said Dorety, and briefly told all that there was to tell about the boy.

"All right!" nodded the chief. "Boy," he added, "you know this dog—this Wolf? All right! Now tell me—is the dog as savage as this man claims?"

The boy nodded vigorously.

"To anybody that he doesn't know," he said.

"Suppose," went on the chief, "that I wanted to get in here any night—I or Dan Dorety. Do you suppose he'd let us in?"

"If you got in," returned the boy, "you'd never get away from Wolf. He'd never let you go."

"Dan," said the chief, "there were two people came into this place to-night. One was Poinier. The dog knew him and let him in. The other was also somebody that the dog knew."

"How do you make that out?" demanded Dorety.

"I make that out," replied the chief, "because that second person got into the grounds and into the house without the slightest interference from the dog."

"The dog," said Dorety, "was up-stairs with Poinier when that second person got in. That second person was a stranger. After he had shot Poinier, the dog chased him out. He caught him on this walk."

"Go slow!" returned the chief. "If that second person hadn't been known to the dog, she couldn't have got into Poinier's house, let alone into Poinier's room. She was a friend, I tell you, of Poinier's, and of the dog's. She was a close friend, for this dog let her in. He let her into Poinier's room. Now get this—the instant that she killed Poinier she no longer was a friend. She had killed the dog's master, and by that act she became an enemy. I know these dogs. I tell you that this dog set upon the woman. She may have tried to shoot him up there, for all we know."

The boy was tugging frantically at Dorety.

"I tell you Wolf is shot!" he cried. "Come on! Here's Wolf. He's lying here."

The big dog growled a feeble challenge as they approached him. True to form, he made ready for a spring. He couldn't negotiate it, and fell back feebly with a moan.

"Don't touch him!" Dorety warned the chief.

"Not so you can notice it," chuckled the other. "Go on, boy. Show us where he's hurt."

Tonzo caught at the chief's electric torch. The boy nuzzled his face into the dog's, and soothed him with a friendly stroke of the hand, a whispered word. He flashed his light to an ugly red spot on the dog's shoulder.

"He was shot right there," said the boy.

The detective nodded.

"It's a bullet wound," he said.

"That was the shot I heard," said Dorety. "I heard it a good distance down

the road. There's one thing puzzles me about it, though—where is the gun that fired the shot? That's what I want to know."

"I got to get him to the kennels," whimpered the boy. "If I leave him here, he'll die!"

"Boy," said the chief, "you stick there with that dog. I'll see he gets attention. Dorety, you come with me."

Under the chief's direction, Dorety telephoned for the department's veterinary. They got him, and the veterinary promised to come at once.

The chief examined the two revolvers again. Dorety thought his own thoughts, but he held his peace. The chief leaned back and dozed until the roar of the veterinary's car leaped out at them through the night.

Somehow, with the boy's help, they got the big dog into the house and laid him out upon the kitchen table. The doctor made a superficial examination of the wound.

"I think," he said at length, "you'd better leave me alone here with the dog and with the boy. When I get results, I'll let you know."

Inside of half an hour the veterinary slipped a partly flattened bullet into the hands of the chief of the detective bureau.

"By gum!" exclaimed the chief. "This is a forty-four!"

"Hers was a thirty-two," mused Dorety. "His gun was a thirty-eight. This bullet is a forty-four."

"The forty-four," commented the chief, "is the gun she carried in her bag to drop Poinier."

"So it's a she?" queried the vet.

"As sure as guns!" returned the chief.

"As sure as three guns," remarked the veterinary.

Tonzo had followed the doctor from the kitchen. The boy's face was white under his coat of tan; his eyes were frantic. He was plucking at the veterinary's sleeve.

"You tell me," he cried in a half shriek, "is Wolf all right? Will he get well? I've got to know!"

"He'll get well," replied the doctor, addressing his remarks to the detective, "if somebody can stay here with him to follow my directions. Chief, have you a man?"

"The boy," suggested Dorety. "He'll do anything you say."

"The dog is a wonder," said the doctor.

"He's worth two thousand dollars, if he's

worth a cent. If he gets the proper care, he'll be just as good as new."

IV

THEY left Dorety on guard inside the house, and a man or two outside. There was a hurried ring upon the telephone just after midnight. Dorety answered it.

"Lon!" exclaimed a woman's voice—a seductive voice it was; but it was insistent, too.

"Yes," said Dan Dorety.

"That doesn't sound like you," went on the woman.

"It's me," said Dan.

"Who am I talking to?" demanded the woman. "It's Mr. Poinier's house I want. I want to speak to him."

"This," said Dan, "is Mr. Poinier's house; and who is this?"

"Is Mr. Poinier there?" demanded the voice, much shriller now.

"He is not," said Dan.

"Who are you?" persisted the woman.

"I am the butler here," said Dan.

It was a false move. The woman evidently sensed it.

"I didn't know," she said, "that Mr. Poinier had a butler. I thought his house was closed."

"We came back to-night," said Dan.

"Will you please bring Mr. Poinier to the phone?" went on the woman.

"He's out," said Dan. "He'll be back in half an hour."

"Where has he gone?" queried the lady.

"He went to the doctor's," vouchsafed the officer.

"So that's what kept him!" commented the woman.

"He'll be back in half an hour," went on the officer. "If you'll give me your number, I'll have him call you up."

"He knows my number," said the lady.

"Tell him I'll be home in half an hour."

"Who's calling him?" demanded Dan.

"Mr. Mulholland's secretary," said the lady, and rang off.

Dorety chuckled to himself. She wasn't Mr. Mulholland's secretary any more than he was Poinier's butler—Dan was sure of that.

It took Dan twenty minutes to trace the woman's call. She had telephoned from a pay-station somewhere on Forty-Second Street, near the Grand Central Station in New York. Was her call of any moment? Dan figured not. It was clear that this wo-

man knew nothing of the murder. And yet—

It was forty minutes after midnight when she called again.

"Mr. Mulholland's secretary speaking," said the woman, a bit frigidly. "Has Mr. Poinier come back from the doctor's yet?"

"He's expected every minute," returned Dan.

"What's the matter with him?" queried the woman petulantly. "Do you know? Are you a friend of his? Is Mrs. Poinier there?"

"She is," said Dan. "Would you like to speak to her?"

"So that's the—" began the lady. "No," she went on. "My business is with him. You tell him to be sure—"

She stopped again. When she spoke once more it was not to Dan Dorety, but to some one else—some one near her at the other end of the wire.

"Well, look who's here!" he heard her cry. "Where did *you* drop from?" she queried, but not of Dan Dorety. "And where did you raise a roll of bills like that?"

Abruptly she rang off. Once more Dan Dorety put in a tracer on the call. This time the woman had telephoned from a big apartment-house on Eighty-Sixth Street, but not from an apartment. She had used a coin booth this time, too.

As Dan turned from the telephone he felt a tug upon his coat. It was Tonzo. The boy was quivering and shaking again. "It's Wolf," said Dan sympathetically. "He's bad, eh?"

"He's better," said the boy. "You come and see."

Dorety went and saw. The dog slept peacefully, and his nose was getting cool. It wasn't the dog that bothered the boy—it was something else.

"Dan," said the boy, "what are they going to do about the man who was shot up-stairs?"

"Son," said Dan kindly, "you mustn't spread things that I tell you."

"No," said the boy.

"They claim the little Poinier lady did it," Dan told him.

The boy thought it over. Still shivering, he twisted Dan's coat in his fingers.

"Dan," he whispered, "what will they do to me?"

"They'll do nothing to you, son."

"Carlisle will!" wailed the boy. "Car-

lisle don't know that I'm here. He'll whale the life out of me—I know he will!"

A sudden compassion for the boy overcame Dan. He placed a friendly hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Son," he said, "I'll see that no one lays a hand on you."

"Honest?" cried the lad.

"Cross my heart," said Dan.

The boy clawed at Dan's sleeve. He thrust his mouth close to Dan's ear.

"Listen, Dan," he whispered—it was a whisper so low that Dan could scarcely get it—"is there anybody in the house but us? Can anybody hear me if I tell you—"

"If you tell me what?" demanded Dorety.

"Can anybody hear?" persisted the boy.

"They cannot," said Dan. "You shut that door there, and I'll shut this."

He suited the action to the word. Tonzo obeyed.

"Can't they hear us through the doors?" demanded the boy.

Dan stared at Tonzo, who was in a tremor from head to foot. Dan placed his arm about the boy and steadied him.

"Son," said Dan, "you got something that you want to tell me mighty bad!"

The boy glanced about him fearfully.

"Dan," he whispered hoarsely, "I know what happened to the man up-stairs! I know what happened to Poinier to-night!"

"You saw?" demanded Dorety.

"I know!" returned the boy.

It was Dan's turn to become cautious. He tiptoed to each door, opened it, and looked about him. Then he locked each door in turn and came back to the boy.

"Son," he said, "you whisper to me all that happened to Poinier to-night."

Behind locked doors, Tonzo whispered out his tale. It was a tale that startled Dan. What was more, it fitted in with the woman's voice over the telephone. When it was finished, Dan examined and cross-examined the boy to his heart's content, but not in the slightest detail could he shake the story. To Dan it was clear as daylight that Tonzo had told the truth.

"And now," said Dan at length, "you tell me, son, how you happened to be here."

"I wasn't here," returned the boy.

"How do you know this, then?" asked Dorety.

"I wouldn't lie to you," returned the boy. "Everything I've told you is the truth."



"I believe that," nodded Dan; "but I want to know just how you know. Son, you must tell me that!"

The boy hung his head.

"I can't tell you that," he said.

"Why can't you tell me that?" demanded Dorety.

The boy's voice rose to shrill hysteria.

"Because you'll laugh at me," he cried.

"I can't stand that! I can't stand being laughed at—not by people that I like. Carlisle I don't mind, for I could never come to like him in the world. He laughs at me, and I don't mind his laugh—not any more; though I'd rather have his kicks."

"Does Carlisle laugh at you?" demanded Dan.

"He knows it hurts," returned the boy. "I used to stay awake all night thinking of the way he laughed."

"What does he laugh at?" queried Dan.

"Nothing—everything," returned the boy. "It's his way of getting back at me; but I've got used to it from him. If Connie laughed at me, I'd kill myself. She's never laughed at me. You've never laughed at me, Dan; but you'll laugh at me if I tell you how I know."

"I'll not laugh at you," said Dan.

"You will," returned the boy. "I know you will; and I'll not tell you how I know."

For half an hour Dorety put the boy through a friendly third degree. He gave it up at length, and took another tack.

"Son," he said, "you know where Connie is?"

"No," said the boy, "I don't."

"You sure do, son," said Dorety. "You used to take letters from her in your pocket."

"Oh, I get letters from her—yes, but I don't know where she is."

The boy tugged at his hip and produced half a dozen worn envelopes. He handed them to Dan. Dan selected one that looked fresher than the rest, and opened it up. It was one of Connie's letters, written in characters like print, so that the boy could spell it out. It contained only two or three sentences, brief and to the point—outspoken sentiments that would sink into the boy's consciousness:

Connie loves you, Tonzo. You must come and see Connie when he lets you. I have bought a new fox-terrier. I got him cheap.

And so the letter ran. Fortunately it was headed with the address of Connie's

boarding-house, which was what Dorety wanted.

"Maybe Connie can get you to tell her how you know," mused Dorety. "I'll take a run over to New York when I get off, and have a talk with her."

V

At nine o'clock next morning Dorety reported to the desk sergeant of his precinct, justified his absence from his beat the night before by special orders that he'd had from headquarters, and got twenty-four hours' leave.

"Detective bureau down there wants to see you before you turn in, Dorety," the sergeant told him.

"Good!" said Dan. "I'd best go down there now."

He found the chief of the detective bureau at his desk.

"Anything occur last night, Dan?" asked the chief.

"I reported in about a woman calling up," said Dan.

"Yeh," grinned the chief. "That lad had a dozen women on his trail."

"This one knew where he was," Dorety reminded him.

"Oh, I'll have this dame reckoned up," nodded the chief. "I'm not worrying about her."

But he was worrying, nevertheless. Dorety could see that.

"You look fagged out, chief," said Dorety.

The detective nodded.

"I've been down to Sandyside," he said. "I picked up the little Poinier woman and put her safe behind the bars."

"Did she talk?" inquired Dorety.

He asked it not only because he wanted to know, but also because he could see that the chief wanted to tell him about it.

The chief smiled broadly.

"Did she talk?" he echoed. "She did. She gave up everything. Sit down a minute, and I'll tell you, Dan."

He told Dan all that Poinier's wife had said; and all that she had said played into the hands of the police. She conceded that she had written the incriminating letter. She told why. Poinier had become financially involved. They owed bills all over town—bills that must be paid. Some of them had been running for a year. Poinier had other obligations, too. Something had to be done. The Poinier place stood

in her name; it was hers. The bills stood against Poinier; but she wanted them paid. They could raise fifteen thousand dollars by mortgaging the place. They raised it, but Poinier didn't pay the bills.

Then she learned the truth. He had raised the money to lavish it upon another woman. This was the last straw. She was through with him. She told him so in the letter.

That was not all. According to her own admission, she had come up from Sandyside the afternoon before. She was through with Poinier; through with the Poinier place. She had suffered too much there. She made up her mind to leave the place to him. She had come back to get some keepsakes that she wanted. She was at the house at dusk.

"Did she see the boy when he gave the dog his supper?" queried Dorety.

"This is her story that I'm giving you," replied the chief. "She saw nobody—so she says. She wasn't there an hour. When she left, it was hardly dark. You know where the trolley runs out there, Dorety. She came across lots. She entered her own grounds by the back gate—the back gate, you get me? And when she left she left by the back gate, too. She claims she didn't know that Poinier was intending to be there. She says she saw no one but the dog."

"She has an alibi, I suppose?" suggested Dorety.

The chief shook his head.

"She has not. It was after midnight when she got back to Sandyside. She admits she didn't see a soul she knew. Trolleys were crowded and trains were late. The woman's got nothing—nothing at all—that says she wasn't there to kill this man, as she threatened to do."

"Did she have a forty-four caliber revolver? Did she have fifteen thousand dollars' worth of bills?" asked Dorety.

The worried look returned to the chief's expressive countenance.

"I'll say for her that she did not," he said. "I took a matron down with me to search her, and between us we left no stone unturned. We couldn't locate the money or the gun."

"What did she say when you told her that she'd shot the dog?" asked Dorety.

The chief chuckled.

"Denied it, of course," he grinned. "She said she'd sooner shoot Poinier than

shoot the dog. She said the dog wouldn't harm her, and she wouldn't harm the dog."

Dorety rose.

"Chief," he said, "do you mind my asking you another question before I go? Did you check up the finger-prints upon the thirty-eight?"

The chief lacked the poker face that most detectives are supposed to have. He started slightly; then he shook his head.

"No," he returned, looking out of the window. "I haven't had a report on that as yet."

## VI

It was half past ten o'clock that morning when Dan Dorety knocked at the door of Connie Carlisle's room in her New York boarding-house. Connie was eating breakfast at a little table in her room. Dan's advent startled her.

"You, Dorety!" she cried.

"You're looking fine," said Dan.

"I'm not feeling fine," returned Carlisle's wife. "Dan, I'm showing in a park that's twelve miles away. It's all hours when I get back at night."

"I've come over," went on Dan, "with a message from the boy."

The woman stared at Dan. Her chin quivered, her eyes filled, and she placed a hand on Dan's arm.

"Dan," she cried, "if I could only have him to myself!"

"That's it," said Dan. "You don't go home. Connie, he wants you bad."

The woman stared at him.

"Dorety," she said, "do you mean to tell me you don't know? Carlisle and I have been divorced. I got a final judgment two months ago to-day."

"Glory be!" cried Dan. "No, I never knew at all. You're free!"

"Thank God, at last!" returned the woman. "I'll get beat by him no more; but I'm not happy, Dorety, so long as the boy is getting kicked and cuffed. He runs the kennels, Dorety; and he'll not run away—he'll not leave the dogs to Carlisle."

"Was it because of the beatings that you got your papers?" queried Dorety.

The woman's eyes flashed.

"It was because of that girl!" she told the policeman.

"What girl?" demanded Dorety.

"That girl—that Eighty-Sixth Street blonde!" spluttered Connie. "She's a burlesque girl that I introduced to him my-

self; but don't let me talk about her, Dan. I care nothing for Carlisle. I don't believe I ever cared for him. It's the laugh that this girl gave me when she got him—that's what I care about. Don't let me talk about her, Dan!"

"I want you talk about her, Connie," said Dorety. "I've got to have you talk about her. I want that girl, and I don't know just where to lay my hand upon her. I don't even know her name."

The woman's voice was sharp, her eyes were cold.

"What do you want with that girl?" demanded she. "Dan, I don't want you to have any truck with any girl like her!"

"What is her name?" asked Dan.

The woman told him—Irene Amory.

"You keep away from her!" she added.

"I've got the street number," Dorety went on. "Give me her apartment number, and her telephone, if she's got one to herself."

"What do you want it for?" queried the woman.

Dan handed her an extra.

"You haven't read it?" he said.

Connie Carlisle read the story that Dan showed her.

"Poinier!" she cried. "I knew Poinier."

"Connie," Dan sharply demanded, "how well did you know Poinier?"

The woman met his glance wonderingly.

"Dan," she breathed, "do you mean to say—you care?"

"How well did you know Poinier?" repeated Dorety.

"Never fear," returned the woman. "I knew him well enough by reputation."

"How well did you know Poinier?" Dan insisted.

"He came one night to see my act," returned the woman. "I would have nothing to say to him; or, yes, I did—I had one thing to say to him. That night, at the show, I introduced him to this Irene Amory. It was a good move, Dan. He dropped me cold. He went off somewhere with her."

"How long did he go with her?" demanded Dorety.

"I don't know," said Connie, "and I don't care. She asked me, ten days later, why I handed her a swell-looking lemon without a dollar to his name. Those were her words to me, Dan. She didn't talk that way to him."

Dan caught up Connie's hand.

"Connie," he said, "you don't fit in. These kind of people aren't your kind of people. You don't belong!"

"I know that well enough, Dan," the woman told him. "It's the dogs that reconcile me to it all." She drew a long breath, and tapped the newspaper. "This is all nonsense, Dan," she ventured, "about Poinier's wife killing him!"

"It is," said Dan.

Connie's eyes glittered.

"Well, she's come to the end of her tether now!" she said.

"Meaning—" ventured Dan.

"Meaning this Irene Amory," said Connie. "She won't be laughing at me any more. She's done for, now!"

Dan's hand tightened on her wrist.

"Then you believe—" he queried.

"I feel it in my bones," returned the woman. "It was this Irene Amory that murdered him. She's capable of doing it, Dorety; and she'd do it for fifteen thousand dollars."

"You think," persisted Dan, "that this girl killed Poinier?"

"What do you think?" questioned the woman.

Dan rose.

"I'm off," he said. "I'm going to round her up right now."

"Then," nodded Connie, "you're pretty sure she did it, are you, Dan?"

"I've got evidence," said Dan, "that I won't disclose to you."

"It nails her, Dan?"

"I'll tell you all about it later, Connie. For the present, let me say that I agree that Poinier's death was due to her."

Dan looked for Irene Amory, but he didn't find her. She had left her apartment—left for good, it seemed. She had taken with her everything that belonged to her and a few articles that didn't. Nobody knew just when she had departed. Nobody knew where she had gone.

Dorety spent hours, on his own, to get a clue, without success. He was a poor detective, and he knew it. In the end he decided to let others pursue the woman, and went back home.

Arriving there, he called up the detective bureau at headquarters, to find out if anything further had developed. Once more the chief talked to him—this time over the wire.

"Dorety," said the chief, "I've been looking for you. This Poinier case is in

the prosecutor's hands. The prosecutor, Dan, would like to see you right away."

Dan looked at his watch. It was only half past three.

"All right!" said Dan. "I'll run up to the court-house and see him right away."

The prosecutor interviewed Dorety in his private office.

"I imagine you're the man I'm after," said the attorney. "You are the officer who discovered the body of Poinier?"

"I am," said Dorety.

"Good!" said the prosecutor. "Tell me everything you know."

Dan looked about him.

"There's a good deal to it," he returned. "I'm not much on dictation, but I'd like to get this down so I won't forget it, if you please."

The prosecutor called in a stenographer.

"Now, you shoot," he said to Dorety.

Dorety obeyed. He began at the beginning and finished at the end. He told everything that had occurred in the Poinier place the night before.

The prosecutor opened his eyes wide.

"Look here, officer!" he said. "This story is convincing and conclusive. Do you mean to tell me that you saw these things?"

Dorety shook his head.

"Prosecutor," he returned, "if I'd seen these things they wouldn't any of 'em have happened; but I know these things are true."

"How do you know?" demanded the prosecutor.

Dorety was troubled. He slowly shook his head.

"I tell you that I know," persisted Dorety. "I can't tell you more than that. I wasn't there myself when the shot was fired that killed Poinier. I've told my story, prosecutor. There's things there that I didn't see myself; but there's nothing there but what I know."

The prosecutor's manner was suspicious.

"You've told it like a man who was on the spot," he said. "You must have some source of knowledge. You must have some evidence!"

"I've got no evidence," returned Dorety, "and yet I know that what I've said is true."

"Come, come, officer!" said the prosecutor. "You've talked to somebody that saw this murder done!"

Once more Dan shook his head.

"I've talked to no one," he returned, "that saw this murder done."

"Positive?" queried the prosecutor.

"I'll swear to it," said Dan.

"I think I get you," said the prosecutor.

"It amounts to this—the story you've dictated is just your theory of the crime."

"You can put it that way," nodded Dan.

"I'll want you when I find this person," said the prosecutor. "You'd better give me phone numbers where I can get you any time of night or day."

## VII

Two weeks later the prosecutor's office once more sent for Dorety. The prosecutor welcomed him with open arms.

"Well, Dorety!" he said. "We've got the person who shot Poinier that night!"

"You don't need me," said Dorety. "I've got no evidence."

The prosecutor chuckled.

"Dorety," he said, "listen. We caught this person on the Pacific Coast, having a joy-ride up and down the Camino Real. When I got the person here, I took your cue. I took that story that you gave us and I read it to the prisoner without saying where I got it from. Dorety, it was the most amazing thing I ever saw. By gad, so far as you were concerned, the thing was only a wild guess—you told me so yourself; but it worked. The prisoner gave up—confessed that the story, as you had it, is true in all details."

Dorety was stunned.

"Confessed?" he exclaimed.

"Absolutely gave up."

"Jealousy?" queried Dorety.

"Ah!" nodded the prosecutor. "And the money was an afterthought. That New York woman would go anywhere and do anything with a fifteen-thousand-dollar roll of bills."

"It was my—theory that put you wise?" faltered Dorety.

"Nothing but your theory," said the prosecutor. "But there's something else again. We've clinched this confession by another piece of evidence that gave us everything but motive. You see once we had our man, we've been able to establish beyond all question that the finger-prints on that thirty-eight-caliber revolver were the prisoner's—Carlisle's."

Dorety found Tonzo at the kennels, nursing Wolf—found him, as ever and always,



with his dogs. The boy leaped up as Dan approached, and cringed.

"Is Carlisle coming back?" he queried.

Dorety shook his head.

"Son," he said, "I've come to tell you that there'll be no more beatings, no more cuffs and kicks, from this time on. Carlisle is never coming back. Son, I've come to tell you that I'm taking care of you for the rest of my days. I'll always look out for you, my boy!"

"You—mean that?" faltered Tonzo.

"Son," went on Dorety, "there's something else that lies within my power. It rests with me to bring Connie back to the kennels and to you. It rests with me to take care of Connie, too—to make her happy, son. It rests with me—"

The boy sprang into Dan's arms.

"You'll do that, Dan?" he cried.

Dan held him off.

"It rests with me to do it, son," he said.

"It is a thing that's in my power; but I can't do it until you do one thing for me."

"I'll do anything for you," returned the boy.

"Son," went on Dorety, "you remember you told me the details of the killing of Poinier by Carlisle?"

"I remember hearing it—I remember telling you," admitted the boy.

"Somebody told it to you?" queried Dorety.

"Somebody told it to me."

"Son," went on Dorety, "it rests within my power to take care of you and Connie all my days; but on one condition, son. I want to know who told you the story of that murder."

Tonzo shrank from him.

"Dan," cried the boy, "I'm afraid to—I'm afraid that you'll laugh!"

"Cross my heart!" said Dorety. "Son, may I be struck dead if I ever laugh at you! I won't laugh at you—I promise that."

"Connie will laugh," faltered the boy.

"I promise you she won't laugh," said Dorety.

"I've got to tell, then," said the boy.

"Yes, son—you've got to tell," Dorety insisted.

The boy's hungry eyes fixed themselves upon Dorety's face, to watch the slightest flicker of an eyelid.

"If I've got to tell you, Dan, I will. It was Wolf—it was the dog that told me," said the boy.

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### THE ADVANCE GUARD

THE hosts of spring have gathered  
In every mountain pass;  
I see the great green army—  
The legions of the grass.

They surge in bright battalions,  
Northward they take their way;  
Oh, wonderful invasion  
Which nothing can delay!

They come with banners flying,  
And stealthily at night  
They gather up new forces  
Before the dawn is white.

I hear the pipers playing  
In every wood and glen,  
To herald the green army  
Of April once again.

You cannot hear them marching;  
With silent tread they pass,  
This glorious procession,  
This army of the grass!

*Charles Hanson Towne*

# The Devil's Trough

CERTAIN INCIDENTS IN THE CAREER OF CAPTAIN PAUL  
LORRAINE, ONCE OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS,  
AND LATER OF THE MALAY SEAS

By James Francis Dwyer

IT is very strange, if one considers all the gossip once associated with the name of Paul Macclesfield Lorraine, that only two authentic descriptions of the man are in existence. Of course, there were good reasons why those intimately connected with Lorraine should keep clear of newspaper offices. Still, there are statutes of limitations that kindly allow small scoundrels who once consorted with great malefactors to brag openly of their former leaders.

One account of Paul Macclesfield Lorraine is that contained in the death-bed story of an American sailor, William Pettigrew, who died in an *asile de la nuit* at Marseilles. Parts of his confession were published in the New York papers, and attracted much notice, but his story is full of inaccuracies. The names of the ships looted and sunk by the poet-buccaneer, as Pettigrew gives them, differ from the names recorded in "Lloyd's Register." So do the dates. Of course, William Pettigrew was on his death-bed, and one could not expect him to be exact regarding names and dates; but his numerous mistakes throw doubt upon his story.

The other intimate account of Paul Macclesfield Lorraine has never been made public till this moment. Only four or five persons have known of its existence—which is curious when one considers what a newspaper scoop it would have been at the instant. Now the moment has passed, and the hands of time have molded fact into near-fiction.

Lorraine has become a legendary figure, and it is only here and there in those strange little ports in the scented seas he knew so well that the chant connected with his name is heard. An unusual chant that

—a haunting, sorrowful song, curiously expressful of the man himself.

Oh, Paul Lorraine! Oh, Paul Lorraine!  
Who fought with the devil and fought in vain;  
Thumbed his nose to the English king—  
Did the same to the King of Spain;  
Married a lady with book and ring—  
Oh, Paul Lorraine! Oh, Paul Lorraine!

This unpublished account of Paul Macclesfield Lorraine, one time of Salem, Massachusetts, is the story related by the boy Edward Hardy, also of Salem, to the captain and first officer of the ship Mary Whiting, of New Orleans, and written down in longhand by the captain immediately after the telling. Unlike Pettigrew, the boy gave the names of the looted vessels and the dates of their disappearance. He also gave the titles of the unfortunate French count and of the distinguished lady whom Lorraine married. He knew the street in Salem where Lorraine was born, the first boat the buccaneer shipped on—the Flying Hound, of Boston—and many other details, showing a much more intimate knowledge of Lorraine than that possessed by the sailor Pettigrew.

Edward Hardy, when sighted by the Mary Whiting, was adrift in a disabled motor-boat in the Karimata Strait, between Billiton Island and Borneo. The log of the Whiting gives the position as "north of Mantaran group"—which is of great interest, as it is the only record that throws any light on the actual position of Lorraine's retreat, the so-called Devil's Trough, which Hardy describes. The boy was in a serious condition from lack of food and water.

The story he told on his recovery fills sixty-four pages of a large ledger, so what is printed here is but the essence of the

tale. The condensation makes it impossible to give the boy's exact words, except in places where they help tell the tale, and where further brevity is inadvisable. Now to the real story.

## II

EDWARD HARDY was a strange, poetic youth of an old Salem family. In his boyhood he heard stories of the doings of his townsman, Paul Macclesfield Lorraine—hardly nice doings, but thrilling to the boy. He conceived the idea of finding Lorraine, and at fifteen he stowed away on a ship out of Boston, whose destination, a sailor vaguely informed him, was "China an' the back o' hell."

He was hazed unmercifully when his presence became known. At Singapore he deserted, crept aboard a sandalwood steamer at Johnston's Pier, and was detailed as cook's assistant when the old sea-crow rolled off toward Banjermasin.

Now watch the tricks of fate. Rolling down by the islands of the Lingga Archipelago—the exact spot unknown to Hardy—the cook sharpened a big knife, wound his watch, led the boy to a small barrel of potatoes, and told him there would be an empty berth in the fo'c's'le if those potatoes were not peeled in an hour.

Hardy had finished half his task when the hour was up. He heard the cook coming. Hysterical with fear, he crept out of the galley and jumped overboard.

We must remember that cook. He figures as an additional stilt of truth to the boy's narrative.

Hardy, who was a good swimmer, was afloat for hours before he struck a beach. He slept for half a day, and when he awoke a man was standing over him.

"A tall, slight man," relates the boy, "fully six feet tall, with a strong, athletic body and an easy, graceful carriage. He wore a mustache; his eyes were soft and brown, and he had dark curls that fell upon his shoulders. He was dressed in white serge, with a broad-brimmed hat of white felt. When I first saw him, he reminded me of a picture I had once seen of Robert Louis Stevenson."

A romantic boy was Edward Hardy. He saw or imagined a resemblance between his real buccaneer and the maker of imaginary buccaneers.

"Where did you come from?" questioned the man.

Hardy stammered out his story of the cook with the big knife. The stranger listened.

"Ah!" he murmured. "It was the cook on the Paul Roche. I know the boat. Some day we'll catch that fellow, and I'll let you cut his heart out with a sharp knife. I despise bullies who frighten youngsters. Wouldn't you like to cut his heart out?"

"How would you catch him?" asked the boy.

"How?" repeated the man with the dark curls and the soft brown eyes. "Why, that would be easy. We'll stop the Paul Roche some day and take him off. Possibly you've heard of me? I'm Paul Macclesfield Lorraine."

Imagine Edward Hardy's thrills! The poet-buccaneer of his dreams was before him. "Possibly heard" of him! Why, the name of Paul Macclesfield Lorraine was the crocus-colored robe of romance on which he floated to the stars!

"Why—why, I'm from Salem!" he gasped. "From your home town! I've heard wonderful stories about you—dozens of them!"

Let us be kind to youth. Who can tell what hero a poetical boy will put upon a pedestal and worship? *Long John Silver* wasn't a bad chap to most of us when we were young, and Captain Flint, who signed his name with a clove-hitch to it—how we puzzled our heads to think out what a clove-hitch was!—crept into our good graces in spite of his misdeeds and his blue-tinted face. A first-class old sea-dog we thought Flint—a bit rough with his men, but then we never thought of serving as an underling to any one.

Hardy tells of Lorraine's amusement at his youthful enthusiasm. He had a sense of humor, had Paul Macclesfield Lorraine. He told the boy he would put him on a boat bound for Singapore, but Hardy begged to stay—begged so hard that Lorraine consented.

The boy's description of the Devil's Trough, Lorraine's mysterious hiding-place, which the British war-ships on the China Station sought in vain, is worth printing word for word, as it was written down by the captain of the *Mary Whiting*:

It was a big hollow between two hills of granite. A ship could come in through a narrow passage and get warped right up to the front of the big cave at the end of the bay. It was an awful big cave, where we all slept and ate and stored things that were taken off ships—all sorts of things.

There were cloths with raised gold embroidery and little rubies on them, and green bronzes and lacquer work that Captain Lorraine said would bring thousands of dollars on Fifth Avenue. There were carved ivories and tapestries and books and pictures and precious stones—a big glass jar full of precious stones! He showed them to me and told me their names—wine-colored topazes, and scarlet carbuncles from Burma, and olive-green chrysoberyls that came from up near Tibet in a place that was so wild that the people, not knowing their value, sold them to traders for a handful of rice. Captain Lorraine had taken most of them from Ah Ling, the junk pirate, that he fought a knife duel with.

A wonderful place was the Devil's Trough, according to the boy's account, and his story of its treasure hoard is supported by the less colorful narrative of William Pettigrew. The romantic youth saw the picturesque side of the place; Pettigrew saw the sordid, pilfering side.

Both Edward Hardy and Pettigrew speak of Boccadoro. To Pettigrew he was "a monster big crocodile in a tank, that chewed anything Lorraine threw to him." The boy describes him thus:

Boccadoro lived in a big pool by himself, and Captain Lorraine fed him. He was the biggest and the wisest crocodile in the world. Captain Lorraine would call him every morning, and Boccadoro would come to the surface and look at the captain out of his dead eyes. The men said he knew Captain Lorraine because the captain had saved his life. They said a tribe of Dyaks had caught him by bending the two sharpened ends of a piece of bamboo till they touched each other, and then thrusting the ends into a piece of beef, which they tossed to the crocodile. Boccadoro swallowed the beef. When it was digested, it loosened the bamboo, which unbent, and the sharp ends came right through his stomach.

Captain Lorraine saw the crocodile when they dragged him ashore, nearly dead. He cut the bamboo out and brought him to the Devil's Trough. The captain thought Boccadoro was hundreds of years old. On the day he put him in the big tank at the retreat he fed him with lumps of beef in which he put little seed pearls. That's how the crocodile got his name of Boccadoro—"Mouth of Gold."

### III

EDWARD HARDY arrived at the Devil's Trough at an interesting moment. He tells of it simply:

On my second day at the retreat Paul Lorraine showed me a copy of *L'Illustration*. Pointing to a portrait of a young woman, he said:

"Isn't she beautiful?"

I told him I thought she was very pretty. Then I looked at the name under the photograph. It read, "The Hon. Dorothea Courtney Lascelles, engaged to Comte Pierre Montleon."

Captain Lorraine was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"I am going to marry her."

"When? Where?" I cried.

"Shortly," he said. "Very shortly."

"But where is she?" I asked.

"She is coming down from Yokohama on a French boat," he answered. "I should think that at this exact moment she is somewhere in Taiwan Strait. I'll take her off the boat as I told you I'd take off that cook of the Paul Roche. We'll get him some day and feed him to Boccadoro!"

It is strange reading, this narrative of Edward Hardy. It calls for imagination to picture the lonely seas of the Malay Archipelago, the innumerable hiding-places that exist in the countless islands, where men like Lorraine could gather to themselves a band of ruffians and defy the law.

If we are inclined to question the truth of Hardy's story, we may recall the testimony of the British commander on the China Station, Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Hanningrode, C.B., who searched for Lorraine and had to admit his inability to find the Devil's Trough. A report from Sir Charles, whose flag was then carried on the old *Hyperion*, dated about the time when Edward Hardy arrived at Lorraine's hiding-place, reads thus:

That the fellow is an American there is no doubt. From all I can gather, he is responsible for the disappearance of the *Melrose*, the *Last Hope*, the *Cadmus*, the *Soerakarta*, and other vessels whose loss has been reported lately, and from whom no persons have been picked up. I have hopes that we shall soon lay this Yankee fellow by the heels.

Poor Sir Charles! His squadron was at Singapore when Paul Macclesfield Lorraine, on his own ship, the *Fool Venture*, crept out of the Devil's Trough, halted the French boat *Gambetta*, and took off the Hon. Dorothea Courtney Lascelles!

No end of a jolly row, you know! Look up the old newspaper files, and see how the cables buzzed. Inconceivable impudence! The China Squadron under Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Hanningrode, C.B., only twelve hours' steaming distance from the scene of the hold-up! Imagine Sir Charles, a whiskered turkey-cock of the old school, pouring left-handed blessings on the Yankee fellow as he swung his squadron in pursuit!

Hardy was with Lorraine on that little mission. His story of it differs in many points from the newspaper account published at the time. He tells of the bravery of the Hon. Dorothea, who, when aroused from her slumber, appeared before Lorraine—it was midnight when the buc-



caneer boarded the vessel—and calmly agreed to accompany him, when he stated that her refusal would mean the sinking of the vessel and the probable death of every person on board. Her maid, Jane Dawe, insisted that she must accompany her mistress, and Lorraine gave the two women fifteen minutes in which to make ready.

It was while they were packing up that Comte Pierre Montleon came upon the scene—came with a rush, according to Hardy's story.

Lorraine was ignorant of the fact that the Hon. Dorothea's *fiancé* was aboard the vessel, so the appearance of the count must have surprised him greatly. The Frenchman had caught the boat at Shanghai, boarding her at the last moment, so that Lorraine's agents were not aware of his presence on the ship.

Hardy's account runs thus:

The Frenchman came rushing across the deck and attacked Captain Lorraine with his hands. Captain Lorraine was unarmed—he very seldom carried weapons—and the two wrestled for a moment before the captain threw the Frenchman down. He was up in a second, and would have attacked Captain Lorraine again, if one of Lorraine's men had not knocked him down with the butt of a rifle.

He was lying stunned when the girl and her maid came up from their stateroom, and there was an awful scene. The English girl thought that the count was dead, and she dropped on her knees beside him. He came around in a few minutes. Then Captain Lorraine's men, who had the captain and crew of the Gambetta covered, pulled the girl away and lowered her into one of the boats.

Just as we were pushing off, the count, who hadn't quite recovered from the blow on the head, staggered to the rail of the steamer and sprang down on top of us, nearly breaking the neck of one of our men. The captain floored him with an oar when he rushed him. Lorraine would have thrown him overboard, but the girl begged for his life, so we brought him with a cracked skull to the Devil's Trough.

#### IV.

FROM this point on the narrative is Hardy's, and what the boy tells is absolutely new material. William Pettigrew does not mention it, he having left the Devil's Trough, for some reason or other, immediately after the hold-up of the French steamer.

Comte Pierre Montleon was three days in bed after we got back to the Devil's Trough. Then he appeared suddenly one morning, as Captain Lorraine was feeding Boccadoro, the big crocodile. He was crazy to kill Lorraine, but the cap-

tain was not afraid. Captain Lorraine was afraid of no one. He never carried a revolver. Sometimes, very seldom, he had a sword; mostly he carried a small whip of plaited leather.

Once, when a big cross-breed Malay ran amuck and was shooting up the Devil's Trough, Captain Lorraine walked quietly up to him and struck him across the eyes with this whip, blinding the madman for the moment, and allowing the other men a chance to tie him up. There were two bullet-holes in Captain Lorraine's hat, the Malay having missed him by a few inches while the captain was walking quietly up to him; but the close shooting of the madman could not make Lorraine hurry.

He thought it was stupid to hurry, and stupid to show fear. It might have been a pose, but it's hard to walk quietly when a madman is shooting at you.

Captain Lorraine had this little whip in his hand when Comte Pierre Montleon came staggering out into the sunshine, searching for him. The count was screaming out all kinds of threats, and one of Lorraine's men rushed toward the captain with a gun. Lorraine laughed and pushed it aside. Then he spoke to the count, who was rushing at him—spoke softly in that nice, soothing voice of his, so that the Frenchman, puzzled by his manner, stopped to listen.

"Why the hurry, my good Pierre?" asked Captain Lorraine.

"You devil! I'm going to kill you!" screamed the count.

Captain Lorraine laughed.

"You're foolish," he said. "If I lift a finger, you'll be riddled with bullets; but if you'll listen for a moment, I've got a proposition to make that might interest you."

"What is it?" cried the Frenchman.

"I didn't know you were aboard the Gambetta," began Lorraine. "I thought you were in France, and I meant to capture the lady and woo her in my own good time. Wait a moment! As you are here, and as you have showed a certain amount of pluck, I'm going to give you a chance to win—an even chance to beat me and marry your *fiancée*."

"What is it?" gasped the count.

"It's this," said Lorraine. "Our meat supply has not arrived in time, and my dear friend Boccadoro is hungry—very hungry. See him down below here, watching us! He probably thinks one of us might fall in, and he's wise to have a bright idea like that. If one of us fell in, it would save the other so much trouble."

The count's face didn't show any fear. He was no coward, was Pierre Montleon. I know Captain Lorraine thought him brave, and there were very few men whom Lorraine thought courageous.

"Well?" asked the Frenchman.

"I always feed Boccadoro from this ledge," explained Lorraine. "Let us sit down on it and toss the dice. If I lose, I'll drop off, and you can see the crocodile make his breakfast. If you lose, I shall have the pleasure of seeing my pet breakfasting off the French nobility."

"And my—our getaway?" asked the count.

"If I lose," said Captain Lorraine, "I will tell you, before I drop off the ledge, of a secret path over the cliff at the rear of the cave. There are two motor-boats stored at the other side, and you

and your *fiancée* can get away with ease. Now, are you willing?"

The count had sat down on the ledge before Lorraine had finished speaking. Captain Lorraine called for the dice, and when they came he handed them to the Frenchman.

"Throw first," he said. "You're the visitor, and we must be polite. Three throws, and the loser goes over. Look at that old brute waiting! I'll wager he knows what's doing."

Comte Pierre Montleon picked up the dice-box to throw, but just at that moment the girl, the Hon. Dorothea Courtney Lascelles, came out of the cave and walked toward them. She was dressed in rose-colored silk, and she looked so sweet and wonderful that Captain Lorraine and the Frenchman forgot everything else to stare at her. So did all the other men who were hanging around the tank, knowing without being told that something queer was happening.

It was strange how the girl knew what was taking place. In dead silence she walked over to the spot where Captain Lorraine and the count were sitting, her big blue eyes wide, her red lips parted a little. She looked at the dice in the count's hand; then she glanced down into the big tank and saw Boccadoro.

I don't know what she said. I wasn't near enough to hear. She spoke in a whisper that could only be heard by the two men on the ledge above the tank. It was a thrilling whisper, though, and some of us seemed to hear it without knowing what she said.

When she finished speaking, Captain Lorraine dropped forward on his knees and kissed the fingers of her right hand, and the Frenchman took her other hand and held it against his face. It was an unusual thing to happen at the Devil's Trough, but not one of the men grinned or did anything to show that he thought it funny. I think Captain Lorraine would have killed any one that he saw with a grin on his face.

The girl walked back to the cave, and Captain Lorraine and the Frenchman stood up, bowed to each other, and walked off in different directions.

That night Comte Pierre Montleon escaped from the Devil's Trough. He stole a small launch and got away in the darkness. Lorraine seemed pleased when they told him. I don't know what the lady thought.

Things seemed to change a little at the Devil's Trough after the coming of the girl. Lorraine was very quiet, and there were very few expeditions. The men grumbled a lot. Once a score of them formed themselves into a deputation and interviewed Captain Lorraine.

He listened to them very quietly till one of the men—a big, ruffianly wretch whose father was a Spaniard and whose mother was a Kling—said that he didn't want the outfit turned into a Sunday-school by the presence of a skirt—meaning the Hon. Dorothea Courtney Lascelles.

Captain Lorraine was about ten feet from the cross-breed when he said this, but the captain covered the distance so quickly that the fellow hadn't time to put his hands up. Lorraine's fist struck him between the eyes, and he fell flat on his face and didn't move for five minutes. Captain Lorraine didn't look to be a powerful man, but when he was in a temper he could do almost anything.

"Clear out!" he cried, turning out the rest of

the men. "If you come here again to instruct me what I shall do, I'll cut your tongues out!"

About a week after that happening, Captain Lorraine and the Hon. Dorothea Courtney Lascelles were married—married with book and ring, as the chant says. A parson was brought from somewhere—I don't know exactly where. He came blindfolded into the Devil's Trough—a very frightened and upset parson. He tried hard to get out of the job, but Lorraine spoke to him sternly, and the parson married them. The bride looked happy. I think she liked Captain Lorraine. Indeed, when I think of what happened later, I'm sure she loved him.

She was very nice to me. She would talk to me for hours, and tell me of many places that she had seen. The men liked her, too. They called her the Princess, and I think they would have mutinied against Lorraine if it hadn't been for her. She was so quiet and so beautiful that they were just a little afraid of her. She seemed unreal, with her soft, trailing dresses of silk, as she walked around that weird place. The maid, Jane Dawe, would follow half a dozen paces behind her, the maid's eyes never shifting from the figure of her mistress. It was the adoration of Jane Dawe that worried the men. A score of them tried to flirt with her, but she could see nobody but her mistress.

Captain Paul Lorraine kept his word about the cook of the Paul Roche who had threatened to cut my throat. He took him off the steamer and brought him to the Devil's Trough. Just to amuse the men and the Princess, Captain Lorraine held a court in the open. He made me get up on a box and tell my story about the cook sharpening the big knife and leading me to the barrel of potatoes. He allowed the cook to pick one of the men to defend him, and this fellow cross-examined me as to how many potatoes I peeled and how long I worked.

Right in the middle of the proceedings the cook fell down in a faint and had to be carried to a hammock. He was too ill to move for nine days, and on the tenth day we were attacked. I do not know what happened to him then.

The attack on the Devil's Trough was very sudden. I don't think Captain Lorraine dreamed of anything like that. We were attacked in the middle of the night. It was a bright moonlit night, and you could see everything very plainly. I was asleep when the first volley was fired, and when I got to the mouth of the cave the fight was on.

It was a terrible fight. The whole place in front of the cave was covered with men fighting, and the noise was deafening. Down at the entrance to the cave I thought I could hear a machine gun. The echoes made me think, for a minute, that there were twenty.

I was knocked down by a piece of falling wood, and I must have been unconscious for quite a time. When I came around, the fight was still on, but it looked as if Captain Lorraine's men were getting the worst of it. Quite a number of men were lying on the ground—twenty or more, I should think. Some were groaning, but most of them lay quite still.

I saw the Princess before I saw Captain Lorraine. She was lying on the ground quite close to me, and Jane Dawe was bending over her, crying, and trying to bandage a wound in her mistress's

shoulder. Jane Dawe couldn't think of anything but her mistress, and the moment she saw me she pushed me into the cave to search for clean cloths.

When I came stumbling back, I saw Captain Lorraine and Comte Pierre Montleon. I knew then who had attacked us. The count had come back with a shipload of men to get revenge.

Captain Lorraine and Comte Pierre Montleon were fighting with swords. I couldn't take my eyes from them. I don't know if any of the other men were watching them at that moment. The fight was going on all around them—that is, the men who attacked the Trough were chasing our fellows and shooting them down.

Captain Lorraine and the Frenchman had no interest in what the others were doing. They were concerned only with each other, and it made me sick to watch them. They were quite close to the tank in which lived Boccadoro, the big crocodile, and each of them was trying to drive the other back into the tank. As I watched them, I thought of the morning when they agreed to throw dice to see who would make a breakfast for the brute in the pool.

Comte Pierre Montleon was a good swordsman, but Captain Paul Lorraine was a better one. He was very supple, and at that moment he was possessed by one of those fits of temper that seemed to bring to him great physical strength. He knew that his wife had been injured—later that night he told me that he thought, when he was fighting the count, that the Princess had been killed in the attack.

Captain Lorraine did not want to kill the count. I mean that he did not want to run him through. He wanted to drive him over the edge of the tank, so that Boccadoro could get the last meal ever given to him in the Devil's Trough.

A lot of the men who now became interested in the fight saw that, and quite a number watched. It was one of those queer, vicious fights that hold you. I couldn't look at anything else, and I found that Jane Dawe, who seldom took interest in anything but her mistress, was watching with big eyes. So, too, were dozens of the count's men. They had killed most of Lorraine's followers or chased them into hiding-places.

Back and back went the Frenchman, Lorraine's sword following him like a silver tongue—a mighty vicious tongue. It darted out at the count's face and body, weaving in and out so that it was hard to follow it. All of us watching the fight could see, by the way in which the Frenchman gave ground, that Captain Lorraine was the master. That tongue of steel was licking the count's face, his throat, his chest—just licking them!

And then, in the little silence that came down upon the Devil's Trough, we heard Lorraine call—call softly, ever so softly. He had a wonderful voice, and, although he only whispered the words, every one of us heard. He called the name of the big crocodile—called him as he called him when he fed him.

"Boccadoro!" he murmured. "Oh, Boccadoro!"

I think that whisper of Captain Lorraine's finished the Frenchman. He was within a few feet of the tank when Lorraine called, and he must have heard the gurgle of the water when the big brute came to the surface. It was an awful thing for the count, but he had come seeking fight.

I could hardly breathe. I saw Lorraine's face in the moonlight. He was quite calm. Inch by

inch his sword advanced. There wasn't a whisper in the Devil's Trough.

"Boccadoro!" murmured Captain Lorraine. "Oh, Boccadoro!"

There came a swift flash of steel, a little cry from the Frenchman, and the fight was over. Captain Paul Lorraine was left on the edge of the tank, his head pushed forward as he watched what was happening down below. It was very quiet in the Trough.

Captain Lorraine walked over to where Jane Dawe and I were standing by the Princess. He knelt down beside his wife, and it was then that he discovered she was not dead, as he had thought. I don't know why he had been so certain that she was killed, but I know that his joy on finding her alive was extraordinary.

He sprang to his feet and lifted his wife up in his big, strong arms.

"Quick, Hardy!" he cried. "Follow me! Lead the maid! Hurry! Hurry, boy!"

He ran into the big cave, which was all dark inside, and I, holding Jane Dawe's hand, followed him. Right to the back of the cave we stumbled. Yells and shouts came after us, showing that the men who had attacked the place were waking up to the fact that Lorraine was escaping after killing the Frenchman.

Captain Lorraine ran on, whispering a word of caution now and then, and always speaking of the need to hurry. We wormed our way through a narrow cleft at the very back of the cave, Lorraine still carrying the Princess. Then we climbed along a ledge of rock that made Jane Dawe whimper, because it seemed as if you would fall an awful distance if you missed your footing; then we went through another passage and out into the moonlight.

I looked around, and I knew where we were. We were on the cliffs behind the Devil's Trough. We were following the secret path which Lorraine had mentioned to Comte Pierre Montleon on the morning when he wished to throw dice to see which of the two should make a breakfast for Boccadoro. I knew that this path would lead us to the motor-boats.

Captain Lorraine laid his wife down on a smooth rock and looked down at the Devil's Trough, which was hundreds of feet below us. Very curious it looked in the moonlight. There were figures like little black ants running backward and forward, and we knew that the count's men were searching out and killing those who had found hiding-places.

Lorraine looked at his watch.

"We were lucky," he said softly. "If the thing had gone off while we were in the passage, it would have killed us, too."

"What thing?" gasped Jane Dawe.

"The mine," said Lorraine. "There's a time mine that will blow the place to bits. I set it when I thought my wife was killed. Come on—the farther we are from it when it goes off, the better."

There was no need to tell Jane Dawe and me to hurry. We ran behind Lorraine up the rocky path, catching at the boulders with our bleeding fingers. Captain Lorraine never stopped for an instant. He had the sure-footedness of a goat, and he didn't tire, although he had the Princess in his arms.

We had reached the top of the cliff when the

explosion came. It was a terrible explosion, and it threw me flat on my face. When I got to my feet, and looked down where the Devil's Trough used to be, there was no trough. The two cliffs on either side had fallen in upon the little bay and filled it in. It made me ill.

There isn't much to tell now. There were two small motor-boats in a cave at the bottom of the cliff. Captain Paul Lorraine put the Princess and Jane Dawe into one. Then he said:

"Teddy, you're going to run the other boat and try to save yourself. You'll follow me out into big water, and then we'll separate."

"Can't I go with you?" I cried. "Can't I?"

"I'm afraid not," he said. "There are many reasons—too many to explain now. I shouldn't take the maid, really. Head out to sea, and you'll be picked up in a day or so. There is water in the boat."

That was all he said, but what Captain Paul Lorraine said was law. I said good-by to Jane Dawe, and then I went up to the Princess, who was lying down on some cushions in the other boat. She had recovered consciousness, and knew what was taking place.

"Good-by, Teddy," she murmured. "I hope you are lucky."

Then she pulled my face down to her and kissed me on the forehead. She was a very sweet lady.

That is the end. Captain Lorraine headed for the open sea, and I followed him. In the big water his boat was faster, and near dawn, when the moon went down, I lost him. At daylight I could see no trace of him. I was three days

adrift before I was picked up by the boat I am on now—the Mary Whiting, of New Orleans.

## V

A STRANGE narrative, this of Edward Hardy! One wonders what became of Captain Paul Macclesfield Lorraine, with his beautiful bride and her maid. No doubt he was heading for some particular place, but where?

A strange, mysterious person was this poet-buccaneer from old Salem, around whom has been written a score of verses that are filled with an indescribable pathos:

Oh, Paul Lorraine! Oh, Paul Lorraine!

Dream and dream of your golden gain!

Palm-fronds harried by big monsoons

Whisper of buccaneers long since slain;

See their ghosts by the black lagoons!

Oh, Paul Lorraine! Oh, Paul Lorraine!

Some day, perhaps, we shall know the fate of Captain Lorraine. A strange region is the Malay Archipelago, with its myriad islands and its great stretches of lonely sea. It holds its secrets with great cunning, but sometimes after long years the truth seeps out. We can only wait in patience.

## A LOVER'S QUARREL

THOU shalt not me persuade  
This love of ours  
Can in a moment fade,  
Like summer flowers;

That a swift word or two  
In angry haste  
Our heaven shall undo,  
Our hearts lay waste.

For a poor flash of pride,  
A cold word spoken,  
Love shall not be denied,  
Or long troth broken.

Yea, wilt thou not relent?  
Be mine the wrong;  
No more the argument,  
Dear love, prolong!

So short a time at best  
Is ours to play;  
Come, take me to thy breast—  
Ah, that's the way!

Oliver C. Moore



# Blind Justice\*

A STORY OF CRIME, PUNISHMENT, AND MERCY

By Frank R. Adams

Author of "Five Fridays," "No Experience Required," etc.

**S**AIDEE McCALL is the daughter of old Reeve McCall, who makes a shady living by copying signatures for clients of the underworld. There is an exciting evening at her father's flat when Swing Cline and his brother Steve call there. Swing has robbed a bank, and wants a forged passport that will enable him to flee to Europe. Just as the document is ready, Sergeant McNab, of the detective force, rushes in to arrest the robber. Swing Cline resists, and is shot dead by McNab, but the others escape. Before leaving the McCalls, Steve Cline gives Reeve the money that Swing had in his belt, telling him to use it to give Saidee an education and a start in a better life.

The next scene shows Saidee serving in France, in charge of a canteen. A wounded soldier whom she befriends impulsively proposes to her, but she will not listen. When the war is over, and she is again with her father, she is surprised to receive an invitation to a banquet in honor of the Governor of the State, given by the Lieutenant-Governor, and still more surprised to find that it was sent to her by her wounded soldier, Philip Logan, the Governor's son and secretary. Philip again asks her to marry him, but she once more declines.

## VI

**S**AIDEE was at a loss how to interpret Philip Logan's line of attack. Of course, what he said was merely persiflage, but he undoubtedly liked her. She knew this because every one did, for one reason; and the other was the fact that his eyes said so, even when his lips were uttering the most undeniable nonsense.

He was good-looking—tall and slender, with fair hair and eyes, and an expression of mingled confidence and shyness. The confidence of his bearing and the shyness in his eyes made him an interesting masculine enigma for almost any girl to solve.

"Of course, I can't expect to win you all in one evening," he was saying; "so I have planned to have some excuse for seeing you from time to time. This dinner to the Governor is the first gun in my campaign. You won't give a hang for the dinner, but it will give me a chance to show you how nice I can be when I'm on my good behavior. You will surely come, won't you?"

"It doesn't seem exactly as if there were any reason why I should," Saidee responded dubiously. "Who's giving the dinner?"

"A chap by the name of William McNab," Philip explained. "He happens to be the Lieutenant-Governor. He's really a

kind of a bounder, and he got his job through questionable political influence, but he means awfully well and is very nice to me. I guess he thinks I can help him socially. Anyway, I helped him get up the list for his dinner, and I put your name on. It's the best way I know of for you to meet father and mother. I know the minute they see you they will say to me, 'Son, why don't you ever marry a nice girl like that?' and I will say, 'Mother dear, and you too, father, I never seem to have any luck when I am marrying girls. I guess I will let you pick one out for me this time.' Then they will pick you, and that will be all there is to it."

"I see," said Saidee vaguely. "You want me to go on exhibition, then?"

"Oh, bosh!" he exclaimed. "There isn't any particular reason why I want you to go. I just made that up as an excuse. I have to go to the fool dinner myself, so I can't come to call on you that evening, and I want to see you every day. It would be nice if you would come to the party, and thus save me from coming over here after it was over and strumming my guitar underneath your window. Of course, if you prefer that, I might say that I strum a very mean guitar. I can play almost loud enough to drown my voice—which is what

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most of my friends say ought to be done with it."

"Then I'll come to the party," Saidee hastily interrupted. "I don't want you to take any chance on catching a cold outside my window on a damp evening."

"I thought that would fetch you! We'll consider it settled, then. We can now devote the rest of the evening to the serious business of discovering our favorite flowers, our first and second choices in motion-picture actresses, and our preferences in literature and vegetables."

## VII

THE machinery of politics had lifted William McNab high—much higher than he had ever dreamed of in the old days before the war, when he had been in the police department as a detective officer. But he carried votes in his vest pocket. How they got there his superiors had not been too anxious to inquire. As a reward for services rendered, he had been handed several political plums.

The last and greatest of these was his nomination for Lieutenant-Governor of the State. It was difficult to see what an active man could possibly want of a figure-head office like that; but want it he did, and like everything else that he wanted it eventually fell into his hands.

He had done much to repair the lack of several graces which had been his heritage, and because of his office he was in a fair way to become *persona grata* in the society element at the State capital. He had no wife—which was a distinct drawback to his social campaign. Lieutenant-Governor McNab realized this, and from time to time he cast his eye about for a suitable candidate for a mistress of his house.

He had no lack of confidence in his personal charm, but for some reason or other he had thus far failed to land a prize in the matrimonial market. Perhaps he had not yet asked any one, although rumor had it to the contrary. In fact, there had been some amusement current among the ladies of the gubernatorial set over the number of mittens he was popularly supposed to have collected.

He was a powerful man with a body which proclaimed his strength. His was a barrel shape, burly but not ungraceful. His agility, however, was that of a prize-fighter rather than a fencer. He looked all right in evening clothes, although he would

have been inclined to have them trimmed with pearl buttons if his valet had not prevented him. He carried himself with the assurance that comes of long dominance over men.

He still had the close-cropped mustache which he had acquired on the police force, but it had turned to a grizzled gray, and on both sides of a point over his forehead his hair had receded. And that, too, was gray—unpleasantly so, and a little patchy.

Lieutenant-Governor McNab's valet and general factotum was a man of parts, as was fitting. He had been acquired by McNab about the time when his master was bitten by political aspiration. His name was Quarles, and he claimed to be English. He also claimed to know about social usages and correct attire.

This last claim he substantiated by the result he had accomplished with the Lieutenant-Governor. After ten years of continuous and persistent suggestion and correction he had painted over on the canvas of William McNab a very fair representation, so far as externals were concerned, of a gentleman.

Quarles himself had a lean and hungry look. He was a saturnine fellow with a lantern jaw, sleek black hair, and a self-effacing manner which was most admirable in a servant. He was something of an ascetic, and there was a bit of the Puritan about him. One could imagine him sitting in judgment on less favored brethren. A dour wig and a chimney-pot hat would have transformed him into a Pilgrim Father. With a tonsured crown, a coarse brown robe, and a rope girdle, he would have been a medieval monk, smugly complacent in his own isolated virtue.

The master and the man were exact antitheses of each other. The Lieutenant-Governor looked as if he had never missed one of the feasts of life; Quarles looked as if he had never tasted any of the earth's delights.

Both Quarles and Philip Logan, the Governor's private secretary, had done their best to extinguish in McNab a tendency to entertain too ostentatiously. In his heart the Lieutenant-Governor had a feeling that sheer weight of money spent would accomplish quicker results socially than a moderated, waiting campaign. Once in a while McNab got his own way and had a party which at least got him into the head-lines of the society column, even if it did not

seem to advance him far into the enemy's country.

This dinner-party in town was an outcropping of his own ideas. The Governor and his staff were to be in the city to confer with a labor commission, and McNab had a town house which he was itching to display. It was obviously his opportunity.

Philip Logan, on being consulted, laughingly admitted that at least it could do no harm to give a big dinner-party, and lent his aid in making out the list of invitations. It was late in the season to expect to arouse any enthusiasm among the elect, and probably the very people whom the Lieutenant-Governor would most want to entertain would be all dated up; but if he wanted to spend some money there could doubtless be found enough guests to make a fair showing, especially if Philip invited his own friends of the younger set. It was in accordance with that policy that he had put Saidee's name upon the list.

It was the evening of the dinner, and Lieutenant-Governor McNab was receiving his guests.

Governor Logan and his wife had graciously agreed to come early and help him with his social operation. Mrs. Logan did not particularly like her husband's running mate, but she had been in politics long enough to realize that McNab's name on the ticket had helped to carry Mr. Logan into the Governor's chair. She was very conscious of their obligation, and meant to repay it.

Governor Logan was a very different type of man from the Lieutenant-Governor. He belonged to what has been called the Abraham Lincoln school of politics. He had come into the public service from the law, and had been the choice of the conservative element—of people who would never have allowed McNab to represent them in anything, had they not been quietly outmaneuvered by the machine politicians. Logan had been accepted by the machine because he could carry the conservative vote, and because the political powers were under the impression that he could be swayed to meet their wishes.

He was a tall, slender man of a distinctly nervous temperament, which cropped out in his characteristic gesture. When speaking he tapped the palm of his left hand with his nose glasses, which he always removed when he stood up to address a public meeting.

It does not follow that he had any less force than a man like McNab, who in the excitement of oratory was apt to pound the table with his fist. Governor Logan depended more upon the intellectual forces which shone from his eyes—big black eyes under almost straight brows. They were kindly eyes, but terribly shrewd. They saw more than his political backers gave him credit for.

His other physical aspects were abundant gray hair parted on one side and waving across his broad forehead; pale, smooth-shaven skin, and a generous mouth, with lips that lacked just a little of being decisive. He was too generous to be unkind.

Philip Logan brought Saidee in the Governor's car. He had gone back for her after his father and mother had arrived. Most of the other guests were there when the young man escorted her up the steps.

This late arrival gave Saidee the effect of an "entrance." She thanked her stars that her costume was up to it. She had only one souvenir of the war, which she prized very highly, and it was on her back. Technically speaking, it was nearly off her back, because it was an evening gown which she had picked up with almost the last franc in her purse when she left Paris on the way to Brest.

This wisp of clothing, which stopped slightly below the knees and extended only as far as necessary in the other direction, was just a shade lighter than lavender—like lavender seen through a mist. The skirt had a curious caught-in effect, which made one look twice to see whether it was bloomers. The bodice, supported over the shoulders by almost imaginary wisps of material, had a soft, indefinite outline which was very wonderful as a frame for a slender, girlish neck and bosom.

In this dress, which was the first Paris frock that Saidee had ever owned, she was tremendously glad that her skin had survived the rigors of the hard winter's campaign in military canteens. Saidee was very lovely, and she knew it. Such self-confidence doesn't deprive a woman of allure—especially if it is not arrogant self-confidence, as Saidee's wasn't. She really thought she was good to look at, but it would never have occurred to her to crush any one because of her own natural advantages. In other words, Saidee was dressed to be a picture, not a killer.

Her conquest of the Governor—and, by

inference, of his entourage—was none the less swift and certain. Saidee had that kindly charm which captivates older people as well as those of the contemporary circle. She had brains behind her sweet smile, and her lips could utter intelligent commentaries. She had seen too many sides of the mystery of life to be intolerant of any one's sorrows or problems.

She was interested in people—which is unusual in young women of the present day. A beautiful girl is apt to be interested in only one person—herself.

Saidee's conquest of her host was equally positive, but of a different sort. Lieutenant-Governor McNab reacted to her youth and freshness in characteristic fashion. To him the fact that she was a charming personality was completely overshadowed by the feeling that she was the most desirable woman he had ever met.

This flashed in his eyes as he bowed conventionally upon meeting her. It was visible in the greedy looks that he stole at her while she was talking to other people—looks which devoured her from the top of her sedately piled hair to the tiny heels of her gold slippers.

McNab had an uneasy feeling that he had seen Saidee somewhere before; but he did not say anything to her about this, because he felt sure that he must be mistaken. If he had met so glorious a creature, even casually, he would surely have remembered her.

But her eyes bothered him. He had thought that he never forgot a face, and this phenomenon of a physiognomy which eluded him was an annoyance.

He dismissed his perplexity, or tried to, by assuring himself that whether he had or had not known her in the past, he certainly was going to know her in the future—going to know her and, if power and determination meant anything, also to possess her. Lieutenant-Governor McNab had waited forty-five years of his life without ever having been stirred like this before.

The introductions over, Philip Logan had sequestered his prize and told her how wonderful she was.

"I always thought you were a nice girl," he said, smiling, "and that was enough for me; but dog-gone it, I never guessed you were a beauty!"

"It's the frock," said Saidee modestly. "I know it's very becoming, but it cost about a hundred francs a square inch, and

it would almost make a Cleopatra out of a grandmother."

"I wish, though," observed Philip gloomily, "that I had made you promise to marry me before I brought you out in this man-trap gown. I was a fool to let the public know anything about you before I had you cinched!"

Saidee smiled at him demurely.

"I rather enjoy these half-proposals of yours, young man."

"Half-proposals?" echoed Philip. "Is it always going to be my lot never to be taken seriously? Confound it, girl, I mean everything I say! All this stuff is a lot more sincere than if I carefully spread my handkerchief on the ground and made dents in it with my knees. If I should whisper in a voice choked with passion, 'I love you,' you would probably give me a cough-drop for my cold. And all this time, while I am trying to think of some way of convincing you how earnest is my young yearning, some other fellow may cut in any minute and take you away from me. It is a great rough world, and as a friend and a disinterested critic I feel it my duty to warn you that all the other men in it besides myself are villains."

The servant, Quarles, stepped to the door and announced Mr. John Swift.

"Which is the other name for the finest fellow in the world," said Philip. Then, taking Saidee's hand as if she were a child, he continued: "Come with me, little one, and meet a regular man."

In this fashion he led the girl to the door just in time to meet the announced guest as he stepped through it.

"Miss McCall, I want you to meet—why, what's the matter? Your hand is trembling!"

"Nothing at all," Saidee assured him. "What did you say was the gentleman's name?"

"Mr. John Swift."

Saidee withdrew her fingers from Philip's clasp and extended her hand graciously to the tall newcomer.

He was a distinguished-looking man, who gave the impression that he would appear to equal advantage as a bank director or in high boots, corduroys, and flannel shirt, directing a gang of laborers. He was not young. On the contrary, his face seemed somewhat older than his figure, which had the alert, sinewy outline of a lad in the first vigor of his strength. His hair, too, was



beginning to gray, and the lines from his nose to the corner of his mouth were sharply engraved.

For the first time since she had been polished and stamped with the diploma of a preparatory school, Saidee was at a loss for conventional phrases to bridge over the awkward first minutes of meeting. Her mind refused to marshal the conventional formulas, and instead she found herself murmuring haltingly:

"I—why—you're quite different from what I had been led to expect!"

"I can well believe that, Miss McCall," John Swift filled in easily. "I know that my friend Philip is apt to exaggerate. I suppose he made you think that I was about twelve feet tall, and broad in proportion, with half a dozen hands and feet. I have never known him to understate a friend's qualifications, except in the case of yourself."

"You just have time to meet the gang before dinner's served, John," interrupted Philip. "Kindly detach yourself from Saidee long enough to shake hands with the Governor of the State. He may not be so good-looking as I admit she is, but nevertheless he started out to be the guest of honor at this party."

John Swift laughed.

"Forgive me for monopolizing your—ah—"

"That's just it," Philip agreed ruefully. "My—what? I can't make her answer."

"We must get together later for a conversation," Swift said to Saidee, in parting. "I feel as if I had known you since you were a child."

"I, too," replied Saidee, "regard you as an old friend."

"Compared to yours, Jack," applauded Philip enthusiastically, "my work is very, very coarse. Here you and Miss McCall are just meeting each other, and you act as if you were a couple of kittens in the same basket; whereas I have never yet been able to convince her that nature abhors the vacuum which is in my heart when I am away from her!"

"Prattle on," said Swift. "You don't interrupt our conversation in the least. Don't forget, Miss McCall, that we have a chat coming."

Saidee watched him with puzzled, speculative eyes as he was going away to run the gantlet of the receiving line. Finally, drawn by that animal instinct which tells

us when we are being watched, she drew her eyes away from the tall figure of John Swift and looked across the room in the opposite direction.

Lieutenant-Governor McNab was staring at her with an expression of mixed malice and triumph. His lips, which very seldom smiled, were turned up in a mechanical, catlike grin.

## VIII

At dinner, Saidee found herself at the other end of the table from the notables who surrounded the Governor. This, of course, was to be expected. As a matter of fact, the farther one is away from the guest of honor at a dinner-party, the more fun one is likely to have. On one side of Saidee was Philip Logan, and on the other his friend, John Swift.

"I put Jack on the other side of you, and I was going to ask him to be especially nice to you," said Philip; "but now, in self-defense, I am going to be just as diverting as I possibly can, in order to distract your attention from time to time. If I had known that he was going to be so fascinating, I would have tied an anchor around the fellow's neck and dropped him over the bridge when we were out walking yesterday."

"Mr. Swift is quite old, isn't he?" Saidee remarked.

"I presume you're telling me that," replied her suitor, "in order to make me feel that I have nothing to fear from so decrepit a rival; but you have not allayed my suspicions in the least. On the contrary, I am more jealous than ever."

Because of Philip Logan's half-jesting pretense of jealousy, Saidee found herself strangely self-conscious in her manner toward Mr. Swift. The latter, however, seemed to have a much better control of the situation.

"Philip tells me," he said in an ordinary conversational tone, "that you were about fifty per cent nicer to him than any other American Red Cross girl ever was to an American soldier. That must place you just one step lower than the angels." Then, in a lower tone, but without changing his expression, and as if continuing in the same vein, he added: "Don't admit that you ever knew me before, and be very careful about my name."

"I understand," Saidee responded in the same tone. "Mr. Logan," she went on a

little more loudly, for the benefit of her vis-à-vis, "is inclined to exaggerate the services I rendered him. As a matter of fact, the principal thing I did was to listen while he talked for hours about you." She dropped her voice again. "Will you come and see father and me to-morrow?"

"Philip is very loyal to his friends, isn't he? I should like to come, but I think both you and your father are better off if I see nothing whatever of you."

"Why?" asked Saidee in hurt surprise.

"For one thing," Swift responded half-humorously, "there is a very large reward out for my arrest."

"But you haven't done anything—lately."

"No, but that word 'lately' has no meaning in the lexicon of the law. My old record still stands against me, and if anything should happen I would not want to involve either of you."

"I should think that the fact that you have been in the army and have an honorable discharge—"

"That doesn't make any difference. My war record is under an assumed name. Listen, Saidee," he said earnestly, "you have done exactly as I advised that night when my brother was killed." His voice took on a tinge of grim earnestness. "Perhaps it's my fault he did not live. The only good that ever came out of that experience was the fact that you have had your chance in life. I wouldn't spoil it for you for anything. Philip Logan cares for you—"

"You mean he thinks he does," interrupted Saidee.

"No, he does. That jesting manner of his is simply the shield of a bashful man who pretends to be bold."

"What if it is?"

"Well, it's your chance. Take it!"

Saidee sat staring before her for a moment in hurt silence. How could the man who had just advised her to marry Philip know that for ten years she had been idolizing him, and attributing to him the virtues of every hero in history? That she had been dreaming of meeting him again, and of laying her little white soul at his feet in payment for the ideals he had given her that night when he had made her promise never to copy another signature? That he had been in a dim, vague way her armor against other men, because she had always held herself in waiting for his com-

ing, feeling sure that some day he would claim that which he had saved?

He watched her sidewise, half guessing what was passing in her mind, but not setting her right, even though he knew.

To say that he had held Saidee in his thoughts since he had last seen her would be to exaggerate. To tell the truth, he had remembered her as a rather lanky, boyish young person, who had aroused his sympathy and almost paternal instinct; but to meet her again and discover that she was in every way a lovely woman had upset his equanimity more than any other single event of his life.

Still, his original purpose to give her a chance in life persisted, and he felt that her chance in life largely consisted in his not being linked up with it in any way. If she didn't understand his renunciation, it made no difference. Undoubtedly it was far easier to set her to one side now than it would be if he permitted her charm to invade his soul. Perhaps the memory of Saidee as she looked that night would haunt him throughout the rest of his life; but surely that was better than to allow any further intimacy to twine the tendrils around his heart. So it was partly for his own protection and peace of mind that he had administered the rebuff which Saidee was struggling to comprehend.

Finally she recovered from her hurt sufficiently to address him once more.

"Then you won't come to see me?"

"No," he answered with finality. "I think not. There is no need of mentioning to your father that you saw me. Cut the recollection of this meeting clean out of your mind."

Philip had been challenging her attention for some moments past by occasional remarks. She had been dimly conscious of them, but in the turmoil of rearranging her ideals she had not definitely directed her mind to the consideration of what he was saying. Now she turned to him with a brightness which she assumed.

"What were you saying?" she demanded.

"I don't remember the exact words," he replied, "but I presume that I was proposing again. I never did it during a dinner before, but I seem to know neither time nor place as far as you're concerned."

"I don't know whether I ever accepted a proposal during a formal dinner, either," said Saidee.

She couldn't for the life of her think

what prompted her response to his presumably half-jesting remark. Probably it was wounded pride—nothing more.

"Do you mean to say that you are accepting me?" he stammered haltingly. "If I heard you right, Saidee dear, pinch me!"

She did.

"Ouch! What am I going to do, girl? How can I kiss you before all these people? What shall I do with my arms? Send for a policeman to put on a pair of handcuffs, or I shall disgrace myself! Shall I stop the dinner and tell everybody?"

"Hush!" Saidee admonished. "Your father is saying something."

Quite true. The Governor had leaned back in his chair, and was addressing the guests in a slightly raised voice. He had not risen, but the emphasis with which he spoke attracted attention as much as if he had been upon a platform.

"I say," he said slowly, as if in response to a didactic question propounded by one of the others, "that the problem of exercising the pardoning power is the most perplexing situation that confronts the man in the Governor's chair. The right to grant life and freedom to those who have forfeited them according to the laws of the State is an embarrassing one. To be able to grant release from confinement, or a stay of execution, is a torture. What shall a man do—follow the laws of God or the laws of men in a place where they seem to be in conflict? Who is to say where lies the dividing line between what is right and what is wrong? How can we mortals decide what is an honorable action? The thing which you do according to your best lights may be, according to mine, the height of dishonor. Every man has a certain law unto himself, which he will not break. Every situation creates its own law, which must be obeyed. They say that there is honor even among thieves. In the case—"

Whether or not his audience agreed with him, Governor Logan was never to know. At least they were paying him the compliment of undistracted attention, so that every one noted when his hand, which had been raised in emphasis, shook with a sudden palsy and then dropped rigid to his side. At the same time the right half of his mouth twisted curiously, his eyes closed, and without warning he toppled sidewise against the shoulder of his wife, who was sitting at his right.

For an instant the assembled guests sat

in stunned silence. Then Philip, his son, jumped to his feet and ran around to his mother's assistance.

"What's the matter, father?" the young man demanded.

His father opened his left eye, and the corner of his mouth moved, as if he wished to speak, but no sound came forth. A look of horror came into his eye as he realized that he could not articulate.

"There, there," said Philip soothingly. "Don't try to talk, dad. You've just got to have some rest. You've been working too hard."

Then he addressed the guests.

"Father needs medical attention," he told them. "Will you call for the nearest physician, Mr. McNab? If some of the rest of the men will help me get him to the couch in the parlor, we can make him as comfortable as possible until a doctor gets here."

Fortunately, a doctor lived in the same block and was instantly available. As most of them had already guessed, he pronounced the Governor's trouble to be apoplexy, and sent for an ambulance, so that the victim could be properly cared for in the hospital.

Philip and his friend John Swift did everything that was humanly possible for the stricken man until an ambulance came, and both of them went with it to the hospital. The other guests lingered awhile in discussion of the disaster, and then made their adieus and departed.

That is, all the guests left except Saidee. She had not thought of it when Philip went with his father in the ambulance; but now, when every one else was leaving, it occurred to her that she was without escort, because Philip had brought her.

It was quite natural that in his concern for his father he had forgotten his responsibility for her presence there. She forgave him fully and instantly; but none the less she had to get home, and in her evening costume it seemed scarcely advisable for her to travel alone across the city on foot or in a street-car. She remembered that there was a lot of melting snow underfoot, and she had a proper regard for the perishability of Parisian confections. No woman can quite ever forget her clothes, and surely no woman could be entirely distracted from a garment such as Saidee's except by death itself.

So, not resenting her abandonment in

the least, she asked a servant to direct her to a telephone.

Quarles escorted her to the extension upstairs in the library.

Lieutenant-Governor McNab's library was an extraordinarily attractive room. It was designed with an enormous fireplace as a principal feature—a fireplace in which one could burn real wood, not gas oozing through little pores in an iron log. There wasn't a picture on the wall, but every other panel was decorated with oriental tapestry covered with glass. This lightened the somewhat somber effect of the dark oak.

The book-shelves were breast-high, and covered with glass doors. Strangely enough for the private library of a rich man, it appeared as if some of the books had been used. Most of them were in red binding, which was a cheerful idea on the part of the decorator. McNab had money enough to have his editions bound according to the whim of the artist.

The telephone was on a dully polished library table. A comfortable armchair was drawn up before it. Quarles silently indicated that this was the instrument to use. Saidee seated herself, and called up the number of her own home.

At the hospital Governor Logan's distress was temporarily relieved by hypnotics and mechanical massages, and the doctor vouchsafed the information that his patient had escaped all immediate danger.

"In all probability this is only the first of a series of attacks," the physician told the waiting wife and son. "The general history of these cases is that similar strokes will occur at various intervals under strains and stresses. One of them may prove fatal—no one can say positively; but in the mean time it will be necessary to guard him against strain and excitement, if possible, although I admit that it will be difficult for a man in his position to be kept from overwork."

Philip, who had risen manfully to the situation, decided that his mother should go back to the hotel to rest. He himself, he said, would remain at the hospital to be near his father.

"What can I do now to help?" asked John Swift, who had followed Philip like a shadow, helping unobtrusively whenever he could.

"Why, I guess there is nothing further you can do, Jack," said his friend. "Good

Lord, yes, there is, too. In the excitement I forgot all about Saidee!"

"Forgot about her?" interrupted Swift.

"Yes," Philip explained. "I brought her to the party, and of course I never thought that she had no one else to take her home. She may be there yet, for all I know. Would you mind, Jack, going back to McNab's and seeing if she is still there? If she is, get a taxi and take her to her apartment. You can find out by telephone, if you wish, and save yourself the trip."

Swift thought for a moment. "No, it's on my way home. I'll stop in there as I go by. I don't like the idea of her being alone with McNab."

Swift had made the last part of his remark only half aloud, as if he were talking to himself, but Philip picked him up on it.

"What do you mean, Swift? You don't like the idea of her being alone there with McNab?"

"Do you know McNab?" countered Swift.

"Why, yes," Philip responded.

"How well?"

"We've been acquainted for several months—ever since I've been out of the army."

Swift pursed his lips before replying.

"I've known him longer than that—for many years, and before I went into the army. That's why I'm going to hurry."

## IX

AFTER half a dozen struggles with the central operator, Saidee managed to get her father on the telephone.

"Mr. Logan's father, the Governor, was taken ill," she explained over the wire. "Young Mr. Logan, who brought me here, was obliged to go with him to the hospital. I don't exactly like to go home alone, and I wondered if you would be willing to come over and get me."

"Certainly," her father told her. "What's the address? I don't think you told me before you left."

Saidee didn't know herself, and she looked around for some means of finding out.

Lieutenant-Governor McNab stood in the doorway.

"What is the street address of your home, Mr. McNab?" Saidee inquired pleasantly. "I want to tell my father. He is coming over for me."

With a smile, McNab gave her the de-



sired information, which she in turn transmitted to her father.

"Come right over," she admonished. "It's late, and every one else is gone. Be sure to wear your overshoes. Good-by!"

She hung up.

The Lieutenant-Governor stepped into the room and closed the door after him. Saidee wondered why, but she was so accustomed to taking care of herself that she didn't particularly question the action.

The Lieutenant-Governor perched himself on the side of the table—not a particularly graceful attitude for a man of his bulk.

"It seems good," he said, "to have a moment's relaxation this way—to be alone with a charming woman like yourself."

Saidee acknowledged the compliment with an inclination of the head.

"I presume you are a very busy man," she responded absently.

"Not as busy as I shall be if the Governor dies."

"But I hope that will not happen," Saidee hastily interjected. "You don't think he is as ill as all that?"

"He may not die, but he'll never be good for much after one of those strokes. A man can never tell when the next one is coming. I presume that I shall have to transact all the business of the State from now on. Well, I think I can do it."

"I am sure you can," Saidee agreed, her mind not particularly working on this problem, which was so remote from her own concern.

"It will be a big job," the Lieutenant-Governor continued, "and I shall not have a great many moments of pleasure. For that reason I would like to make some provision to insure that the little time I do have will offer me more than ordinarily pleasant relaxation."

"I'm sure I hope you'll succeed in your purpose," said Saidee, not quite easy in her mind as to what he was driving at.

"I'm glad that I have your good wishes." Lieutenant-Governor McNab regarded her shrewdly. "It is within your power to help me a great deal."

"I don't believe I quite understand what you mean."

"You will. I am worth quite a lot of money. I have a fine home here, and another one at the State capital. I stand high in politics. If I wish I can be sent to Washington."

"I am sure," said Saidee politely, "that you are to be congratulated upon your achievements."

"It sounds as if I was bragging," said McNab; "but I wanted you to know just how I stand financially. It might interest you more than you think. There is no use in telling you how good-looking you are. Every woman worth looking at knows it herself. I don't mind saying that I am pretty hard to please, but you got me the minute you stepped inside my house. I said to myself, 'There's the girl I've been waiting for. I want her for my own;' and now I am telling you."

He had not leaned toward her, but Saidee drew back in her chair as if he had. She smiled.

"Why, surely, Mr. McNab, you're joking! I scarcely know you. We met for the first time to-night."

"Do you think so?" he questioned.

"I don't remember ever to have seen you before," Saidee said, struggling with a dim impression that perhaps she had encountered the Lieutenant-Governor in some of her former experiences, possibly overseas. Men looked so different when out of uniform.

"Perhaps you wouldn't remember until I recall it to you," he suggested, interpreting her puzzled silence.

They were interrupted by a discreet knock on the door.

"Come in," McNab invited.

The door opened, and Quarles stepped inside, closing the door after him.

"What is it?"

"There is a gentleman down-stairs who wants to know if Miss McCall is still here."

"Is it my father?" asked Saidee, relieved that the interruption was so timely.

"No, ma'am, I don't think so," Quarles responded, unsmiling. "This is one of the young gentlemen who was here this evening—Mr. Swift, I think his name is."

Saidee sank back in her chair.

"Tell Mr. Swift that Miss McCall went home about half an hour ago," ordered the Lieutenant-Governor.

"Very well, sir."

"No, no!" interrupted Saidee. "I wish to see him!"

"Do as I directed," McNab commanded in a tone which brooked no demur.

The servant started to go.

"Quarles!"

The man stopped and turned to his em-

ployer. The latter made an unintelligible sign with his right hand.

"Yes, sir," the servant responded.

Immediately thereafter he left the room and pulled the door to after him. It closed with a double click.

Saidee started up from her chair. McNab watched her movements with admiration. She went hurriedly to the door and turned the knob, but it resisted her. The door was locked.

### X

SAIDEE stood with her back to the center of the room for a moment. What could it mean? She had to gain a second's time to think, to still her rapidly beating heart, which warned her that she was in danger. One thing was certain—she must not show her alarm. It would never do to lose control of herself, or to let McNab see that she was frightened.

At last she turned and walked slowly back to the table.

"So that's why you called your servant back," she said, "to order him by a secret signal to lock the door on the outside. Apparently you two have a perfect understanding!"

"Quarles is a good man," observed the Lieutenant-Governor non-committally.

"Why did you have him lock the door?" Saidee inquired, repressing her emotion and speaking very evenly.

"So that we would not be interrupted," McNab explained in an equally matter-of-fact tone.

"And I suppose you sent Mr. Swift away for the same reason?" she continued.

"Exactly."

"Well, now that we are quite secure from interruption, what can you possibly have to say to me?"

"It will take some time," the Lieutenant-Governor began easily. "You may as well sit down and be comfortable."

"I prefer to stand," Saidee replied. "I am young yet, and," she added significantly, "strong and active."

"I've noticed that," he conceded. "I admire you for it. After all, there is nothing so marvelous as physical perfection in a woman."

Saidee blushed at the implication in his tone. She could not conceive how a man could dare to address any one as this man was addressing her, and yet it was happening. It was inconceivable that a man in his

public position would risk slanderous stories such as she might disseminate; but the fact remained that he was doing just that.

He now came out flat-footedly.

"I want you, Saidee McCall," he said. "I want you for my very own."

"Is that a proposal?" Saidee demanded, not because she particularly cared whether it was or not, but to gain time.

"You can take it that way if you wish," Lieutenant-Governor McNab replied with a sardonic smile. "I'd just as soon marry you as not. It is nothing to me either way. I only know that I want you, and I'm willing to go to any extreme in order to gain what I desire. That's fair enough, isn't it? All my cards are on the table."

"All right," Saidee replied, studying him. "Then here are mine also, face up. I don't intend to belong to you under any condition whatever, and I hope I shall never see you again."

"I suspected that you had spirit," he said slowly; "and I don't admire you any the less for it. You will get over disliking me after we have lived together for a while. I can give you so many things a woman wants that you will forget how I won you."

"How you won me!" Saidee echoed half sneeringly. "Won me! You haven't won me. You couldn't win me if you lived a thousand years!"

"Humph! I'll take a chance on that." "You won't have any opportunity, because you will never see me again."

Saidee, who had maneuvered herself to a position near the telephone, grabbed the instrument and shouted into the receiver:

"Help! Help!"

The Lieutenant-Governor made no motion to grab the instrument from her hands, as she had expected. Instead, he sat swinging his leg from the edge of the table and regarding her with a tolerant smile.

Saidee fluttered the receiver hook up and down to get an immediate response from central.

"I am afraid that my man has carelessly disconnected the telephone from downstairs," McNab apologized with mock humility. "In the evening he often does that, so that I'll not be disturbed by the ringing of the bell."

The deadness of the instrument convinced Saidee that he was speaking the truth, and she hung up reluctantly. Her mind was working like lightning, darting

hither and thither in a vain search for some loophole which her antagonist had left unguarded. He seemed to have provided against every emergency, and she suspected that his arrangements had been perfected by frequent repetitions.

It was really the first time that Saidee had ever found herself enmeshed in a conspiracy. Hitherto she had always thought that the general trend of humanity was kindly, that villainy existed chiefly in the minds of those who wrote plays or hectic novels. It was hard to realize that she was up against a concrete wall which could not be set aside by the closing of a book or the lowering of a curtain.

"Well?" demanded the Lieutenant-Governor coolly.

Saidee regarded her captor with equal detachment.

"You want what?"

"You."

"I understand; but suppose I should say that I would marry you. What makes you think that I would keep my word after I had left this room—after I was once safely at home with my father and surrounded by my friends?"

"There are two reasons why I think you would keep your word," said McNab slowly. "One of them is that when you leave this room it will probably be to your social advantage to bear my name. People will talk, you know. I hadn't really counted on your going away until to-morrow."

Saidee flushed painfully, conflicting emotions of anger and fear struggling for supremacy in her breast. She wanted to beat her hands upon the table, to run around and tear at the hangings, to smash the windows—anything to break through and away; but she knew that such a course must be futile, that there could scarcely be a way out that her jailer had not guarded. She told herself that she must be calm, that she must extricate herself from this predicament by the use of sheer wit, by straight thinking. Feminine hysteria would never get her anywhere.

She controlled her voice enough to say:

"You said there were two reasons. You have told me the first one. What is the other?"

"The other is a pretty good one, too," answered the Lieutenant-Governor. "You will admit that it is when I tell you that I met you for the first time more than ten years ago."

He paused and smiled, watching the processes of her mind as she raced back ten years to recall what had happened.

"Do you recollect now, kid?" As his memory went back, too, he dropped the acquired culture of the Lieutenant-Governor and once more assumed the diction of the man he had been. "You thought I didn't notice you much, didn't you? But you got me, in a kind of a way, even then, even if I was pretty busy with a couple of bank-robbers." He saw a light in her eyes. "That cinches it in your mind, don't it, kid? Bank-robbers! Who am I? You guessed it."

"You!" Saidee exclaimed with a dawning horror in her eyes. "You are the man who shot Swing Cline!"

"You admit your identity, don't you? I killed Cline in self-defense. You got away very neatly that night. It was you that cut off the light, wasn't it? I thought so. You had good nerve. I had a deuce of a time to-night trying to remember where I had seen you before, and I don't think I would ever have placed you if it hadn't been that you almost called Steve Cline by his right name to-night."

"What?" The word leaped from Saidee's unguarded lips.

"Got you where you lived that time, didn't I? Apart, I don't suppose I'd have recognized either one of you, but together it came to me the minute you nearly fumbled the new monniker!"

The past had slumbered so long that Saidee scarcely recognized the snarling thing when it leaped out at her. She had never been conscious of shame or remorse for the dim cycle of events from which she had sprung. Like a perfectly natural and healthy animal, she had accommodated herself to the environment in which she found herself placed without much thought about the morals of her conduct. For many years she had lived among people who observed the code. She had almost forgotten that once upon a time the law and its officers had been to her only something to evade, to frustrate by every means in her power.

Now the past dragged her back, willy-nilly, to answer for deeds that she had never committed, to punish her for having been born where she was, to make her a criminal because, by accident of birth and association, she had once been under the suspicious eye of the law.

McNab interrupted her bitter thoughts.

"You remember me now, don't you?"

Saidee nodded.

"Good! Now that we understand each other, let's sit down and talk this thing over calmly."

Saidee hesitated.

"And suppose," continued McNab, "that we cut out the virtuous heroine stuff. I don't mind your putting it on with other people, if you can get away with it; but me, I know you. So far as I am concerned, I don't care if your record ain't exactly straight. I'm willing to be generous, I am. A girl as good-looking as you are don't have to be a perfect character. In fact, I like 'em when they're a little naughty. What do you say, kid?"

He made a motion as if to touch her. Saidee drew away.

"Why, I—I'm engaged to Philip Logan," Saidee finished, as if that were an argument.

"No, you're not!" McNab laughed. "You're not, for two reasons. One of 'em is that I won't stand for it, and the other is that he will break it off himself if he finds out who you are. My advice to you is to tell him that you found somebody else, because if you don't"—he raised his voice threateningly—"because if you don't, I will!"

Saidee's mind, detached, stood off and surveyed the two of them standing there in that locked room. What should a girl do under similar circumstances, trapped by a man who could send her father and her benefactor to jail?

She watched the struggle going on in her own mind, and wondered what conclusion it would reach. There seemed to be no solution.

McNab sensed the futile scampering of her thoughts.

"I think I'm being mighty fair with you. Here I am offering to marry you when I don't have to."

Saidee interpreted the ominousness of that phrase, "I don't have to." She walked swiftly to the window and back again in an agony of indecision.

"It's a mighty simple way to save your father and Steve Cline a lot of trouble," McNab continued. "Yes, I'll even lay off of Cline, too, if you say so. I'm willing to be generous to my wife's friends and relations. Your father is on his way here now. You sent for him yourself." He

picked up the telephone instrument suggestively. "Shall I telephone the police station to send over here for him, or are you going to be reasonable?"

"Please, please!" begged Saidee. "Please let me go! Father hasn't done anything. We have been so happy!"

"Your father hasn't done anything? We'll let the judge decide that. If he hasn't, where did he get all that money to send you to school and to live in comfort? Oh, yes, I've been keeping track of you people, but I've let you ride, because I didn't think you were worth bothering about. I hadn't seen you, and that makes a difference. Do you want to explain where you got your money?"

That was just it. Saidee knew that the funds which had provided for her education were the proceeds of a bank robbery. She could not save her father at the expense of Steve Cline. Even though he had rebuffed her that evening, had set aside the offer of her devotion, still she could not get around the fact that she owed to him all her advantages in life. No, she could not give Steve up to the police.

Lieutenant-Governor McNab pressed a push-button on his desk and took up the telephone.

"Quarles!" he said, in a moment. "Connect up with outside and get police headquarters."

"Wait!" said Saidee. "Let me think!"

"You can go on thinking while I'm talking," said the Lieutenant-Governor. "Hello, is this the central office? McNab speaking. Send over a couple of men. A dangerous character who has threatened me is going to call on me to-night. There may have to be an arrest. Tell them to be on the lookout for an old man with white hair who walks slightly stooped over."

McNab hung up.

"There!" he said. "The boys will be here in case we need them. If you say so, I can tell them to go away. It's up to you. I don't suppose your father would ever live to come out of jail. A small stretch in the pen would be his finish."

"Tap, tap, tap," on the locked door.

"Who is there?" McNab demanded.

"Quarles, sir. The gentleman is downstairs waiting for his daughter."

"Very well, Quarles. He'll have to wait a few minutes." McNab looked up with a grin. "You see how easy it's going to be, don't you?"



A picture of her old father hesitating, lacking in decision, facing a trial and a subsequent term of imprisonment, confronted Saidee.

"If I say that I'll marry you," she said, coolly bargaining, and working around so that the table was between her and him, "will you let us go now before the police come?"

"I thought you would make up your mind to promise!" said Lieutenant-Governor McNab.

He started after her.

"But I said I would promise!" protested Saidee breathlessly.

He had driven her into a corner.

"I know. I am taking your word for it," he said, his eye gleaming with exultation; "but surely you don't mind giving me a little payment in advance?"

Saidee screamed and struck at him with her two fists. In surprise he stepped back. She slipped out from under his arm, and, like a non-reasoning animal, ran to the door, at which she clawed and beat as if her tiny strength could break it down.

## XI

OUTSIDE the Lieutenant-Governor's mansion a man approached the front door. Instead of ringing the bell, he stood for a moment looking up and down the street, and then gently turned the knob. It resisted.

Still he didn't ring. Instead, he regarded the door thoughtfully for a moment, and then descended the steps and went around the yard, keeping rather close to the walls of the building.

On that side the windows of one of the down-stairs rooms were lit up. The man outside looked into the room. It was a drawing-room, and in it, alone, sat an old white-haired man with long, slender fingers, with which he beat a nervous tattoo on the arm of his chair. He appeared to be waiting—expectant.

The man outside moved on. Up-stairs three drawn shades were illuminated about the middle of the house. While he was thoughtfully regarding those windows he heard a muffled scream from somewhere above. Pausing only to tie a handkerchief over the lower part of his face, he began to climb.

That same scream which had galvanized him into activity was also heard by the white-haired gentleman who had been sitting in the drawing-room down-stairs tap-

ping his knee with nervous fingers. He sprang to his feet, looked around with customary indecision, and then, forced into action by the sound of blows and the scurrying of feet above, left the drawing-room, turned to the stairs in the hallway, and started up.

Saidee, inside the locked room, was struggling in the embrace of the Lieutenant-Governor. The fact that his arm was around her did not mean that she had yielded in the least. On the contrary, she was putting up a fight at close quarters which taxed the man's strength to the utmost. She was twisting, scratching, biting. She employed all the tactics of a panther.

This was the kind of a struggle McNab enjoyed. A woman who wouldn't fight he would not have considered worth trying to win. He even laughed as her fists rained on his face.

Slowly but surely he was overcoming her resistance, bearing her down by sheer weight and strength. He had her hands pinned to her sides and had swept her off her feet, slipping one arm under her knees and lifting her bodily from the floor.

There came a rap at the door—not a signal from Quarles, the servant, but a loud pounding.

"Help!" screamed Saidee; but McNab held her face against his shoulder, so that the cry was stifled.

"Saidee!" shouted a voice outside the door.

"There's your father," said McNab grimly. "He's waiting around nice and handy where the police can get him. Better tell him to go away. Tell him you're going to stay here to-night. It will save a lot of trouble!"

What Saidee would have done on the horns of this dilemma she was never to know. The shade at one of the windows flew up with a bang.

"What the hell?" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Governor, looking toward it.

A tall man, wearing an indefinite-colored gray overcoat, and muffled to the eyes in a scarf, was climbing in through the window. The intruder made no comment, but swiftly approached the Lieutenant-Governor and the girl.

"Drop her!" he said grimly.

After a second's hesitation the Lieutenant-Governor obeyed. The masked man spoke to the girl.

"Out of the window with you! You

can hang by your hands from the balcony and drop. Make it snappy!"

Saidee did not stand upon the order of her going, but accepted her dismissal without comment. As she stepped through the window, she looked back, to see the two men locked in a determined grapple.

Outside, in the clean, sweet air of night, Saidee stood for a second on the balcony to collect her strength. Then she climbed over, and, following the advice of the masked man, hung by her hands from the balcony and dropped.

Reever McCall, outside the locked door, thought he had heard Saidee's voice within—Saidee's voice raised in a cry for help. The idea almost drove him frantic, especially as he also heard the sounds of a struggle going on inside. These seemed to grow louder every moment. A chair broke with a splintering crash, as if some one had thrown it across the room. There followed a thud, as of some one falling, and the tinkling of glass.

Frenzied with anxiety, Reever McCall, twisting the knob, shouted:

"Open the door!"

All at once the noise inside ceased. It was succeeded by absolute silence.

To the father, waiting outside, this was worse than the sound of the struggle. He felt that he must know what had happened, what had precipitated that ominous calm.

He looked around him. In the hall stood a heavy, straight-backed chair. With unexpected strength he picked it up, swung it over his head, and brought it down against the panel of the locked door.

The panel cracked. At the second blow it splintered, and at the third it gave way.

Reever McCall stepped through the broken door into the room. It was absolutely quiet, and overturned furniture was the only evidence of the struggle he had heard. Not a soul was in sight.

Then there was a groan. Guided by that, he looked on the floor and behind the library table.

There lay the body of a man—a man whom he did not know, but whom he seemed to remember vaguely to have seen somewhere before. As Reever McCall bent over him, a slow trickle of blood ran out from under the unconscious man's head.

"Hands up!" spoke a voice behind him.

Reever McCall whirled and rose to his feet.

"This is the man we're looking for!" said one of the police officers to the other. Then, to McCall: "Lieutenant-Governor McNab telephoned us to expect you. By God, Jim, we're too late!"

"What?"

"He's croaked McNab already."

## XII

SAIDEE got home as a wild beast, wounded, scrambles to its lair. Panting, slipping in the slush which retarded her progress and made each step more fatiguing, she walked every step of the way. The thought of a cab or a street-car did not occur to her.

Life couldn't be as horrible as the cross-section of it she had just left behind. She felt that she must place as much distance as possible between it and herself, as if the greedy, clutching arm of foul reality were reaching out after her to despoil her of her ideals.

Still, no matter how far away she ran, she had the horrible feeling of being tethered to the house from which she was escaping. She was taking her body away, but her mind was still there. It would eventually drive her physical being back.

What other possible course was open to her? Not to go back meant to turn her father over to the police—her father and Steve Cline. It would be just as selfish to purchase her own freedom at the expense of Steve, who had done so much for her, as to betray her own flesh and blood.

Therefore it was only instinct that drove her away blindly. She kept telling herself that she would have to go back, but unreasoning fear spurred her steps. Just as an expert rider sometimes lets a fractious horse run itself tired, Saidee now, with detached mind, watched her feet carry her futilely away. When they had run as far as they could, she would regain mastery and make them turn back; but for the moment she had lost control.

She had, of course, during her walk home, a chance to turn over in her mind a succession of wild schemes of escape; but there was a flaw in every one of them. Even supposing that she and her father could pack up and get away scot-free, they would have to leave behind John Swift, alias Steve Cline, who would have to pay for their escape.

Being guided by considerations of honor, which were to her perhaps more compelling

than morals, Saidee's soul revolted at the idea of taking her own freedom at the expense of that of a friend. Perhaps this was an outcropping of the boyishness, the ability always to take her own medicine, which had distinguished Saidee in her far-away girlhood, when she had been allowed to play with the male youngsters of the neighborhood because she was the only girl who never cried when she got hurt.

Yes, she would go back. The Lieutenant-Governor knew she would—she could depend upon that. If he really cared for her, as she was fully convinced that he did, he would make no move to jeopardize the practical certainty that she would come to him of her own accord.

Therefore she dismissed the probability that McNab would at once show his hand in regard to her father. He would doubtless prefer to keep a threat over the old man's head than to spring the trap and thus lose his hold on the daughter.

Arrived at home, she discovered to her dismay that she did not have the key to the apartment. Then and only then did she remember that her father had gone to get her, and was probably waiting for her in the drawing-room of the Lieutenant-Governor's house.

She couldn't force herself to go back, however—not yet. It was too much to demand of her rebellious physical and mental entity. Probably her father would soon find out that she had left, and would follow her. In any case it was better to wait a little while.

So she sat on the steps of the entry-way, a sheltered corridor which was half-heated. The time passed on leaden wings. After an hour she began to wonder if Lieutenant-Governor McNab was detaining her father as a hostage for herself.

And then there was the problem of the man who had rescued her, who had climbed in at the window just in time. Who was he? Could he be a burglar with a chivalrous strain in his nature, who had done this job of knight-errantry merely in passing, as a preliminary to rifling the house? Or was he the holder of some private grudge against the Lieutenant-Governor, who had happened to choose that particular moment for his revenge, and had arrived opportunely at the crisis of Saidee's adventure?

It scarcely seemed possible that the rescue had been something deliberately

planned to fit Saidee's own case. Her presence in the Lieutenant-Governor's house was not known to any one except her father, and she was sure that it was not her father who had entered by way of the window.

About two o'clock she began to get frantic, and determined that at no matter what cost to herself she would return and find out what had become of her father. He was too old a man to be left alone; so she dragged her body to the nearest street-car line, and waited impatiently for an owl car.

It was while she was standing huddled in the doorway of a grocery-store, long since closed for the night, in order to escape the rain, that the delivery wagons for the morning papers came rumbling by. It was not very far from the center of town, and the newspapers reached the distributing stations shortly after they were printed.

It happened that a young merchant prince of news-vending had his headquarters in a sort of a cubby-hole in that same building. He rushed out to bring in the morning editions, rather than permit the driver to throw them carelessly on the pavement, as he ordinarily would have done.

Saidee could not help hearing the conversation that took place between the delivery man and the newsboy.

"Big stuff this morning," said the driver. "Better take an extra hundred."

"But it's raining," objected the boy, "and people won't be out much."

"They'll come out to find out about this, though," insisted the delivery man.

"What is it?" the boy inquired with languid interest.

"Somebody killed Lieutenant-Governor McNab," said the delivery man. "He's a big guy in this town. Of course, if you don't want to take the extras—"

"I'll take 'em," the boy said decisively. "Everybody in this burg knows old Bill McNab, and two-thirds of 'em will be darned glad to find out that he's dead!"

In a way, the words took a weight from Saidee's soul. She could go where she wished now, without the awful, oppressing fear of having that man find her. She knew that his death was the only thing that could save her from ultimately falling into his hands.

On the other hand, it seemed dreadful to contemplate the fact that so short a time ago she had seen him alive and strong, that

the tragedy had been enacted in the brief interval while she had waited for her father to come home.

She began to wonder about the details of McNab's death. How he had been killed? By whom?

And why, after all, should this crime make her father late in coming home? Perhaps—

A suspicion of the truth clutched at her heart as she resolutely stepped out from her shelter and sought the place where the newsboy was hastily sorting papers. He looked up in surprise. The idea of a woman being abroad at that time of the night was unnatural. He stared inquisitively.

The surprise, however, did not interfere with his charging her five cents for her paper, alleging that the price was due to the fact that it was an extra.

There was a light in the street outside—an arc-light. Standing under it, the newspaper getting wet and blurry in her hands, Saidee read the head-lines. The second subhead confirmed her worst suspicions. It read:

#### SUSPECT NAMED McCALL UNDER ARREST

She groaned. The owl car which she had been waiting to take came bounding and sputtering over the tracks, shooting electricity over the trolley contacts like a display of fireworks; but she did not hail it. Instead, she heard it go thundering by while she stood, dazed, on the corner underneath the arc-light, holding the slowly dissolving newspaper in her hands.

What an awful blow had struck the comfortable harmony of her home! Of course, it was absurd to think that her father was guilty. His innocence could no doubt be easily established; but his arrest might lead to an investigation of other things. She knew that her father, frail and sensitive as he was, would probably never live through such an ordeal.

It was characteristic of Saidee that in her moment of anguish she did not dwell upon the effects of the catastrophe upon herself. She dismissed as of no importance the thought that the arrest of her father, and the subsequent inevitable investigation, would make her an outcast in the society to which she had not exactly aspired, but which had gradually and gently taken her in and allowed her to become accustomed to its soft comforts.

Saidee walked ploddingly home, found a

ladder, which she placed against the fire-escape, climbed to her own apartment, and broke a window to get in. What did it matter now what people thought? She had to have a place where she could sit down, free from undistracting influences, and think this thing over.

She was still wrestling with her problem when the belated dawn found her walking the floor in her damp evening clothes, a strange, incongruous, and bedraggled figure, unconscious of dampness, darkness, and the passage of time.

Philip Logan sought her there. Relieved for a moment from his exacting attentions to his father, he rushed to her to be of what assistance he could in the time of her trouble.

"Child alive!" he said, in the stern tone of a parent addressing an infant who has been playing in the mud with its best dress on. "What are you doing up at this hour and wearing your prettiest gown?"

Saidee only waved her hand at him deprecatingly.

"Please go away," she said.

"Not on your tin-type!" declared Philip. "You'll go nutty all by yourself here. I was afraid you might have heard about it, so I came over as soon as I could leave dad. He's much better."

"I am glad of that," Saidee murmured, without thinking of what she was saying; "but it doesn't make any difference. You can't stay here with me."

"Why can't I?" the young man demanded. "If there's any one person who can help you right now, I should think that person would be your fiancé."

Saidee smiled heart-brokenly.

"You're not my fiancé."

"I'd like to know why I am not!"

"There are good reasons why you can't be. It would never do for the son of the Governor to have his name linked with that of the daughter of a man who is accused of a terrible crime."

"Bosh!" Philip ejaculated. "I don't understand how it all happened, but I know that the police have got it wrong."

"But there are other reasons," Saidee continued. "There are other things which are true even if—even if—father did not—do what they say he did."

"Forget it! I'm here to stand by you and yours to the limit of my ability. When you are all out of the woods, and everything is clear, then, if you want to break



this engagement, you can; but until that time you haven't any right to turn me down like a pup. Is that understood?"

A sudden surge of emotion brought Saidee into his arms. She cried softly on his shoulder.

"I didn't realize before to-night that I have had nobody but my father!"

"There, there!" said Philip soothingly.

"I thought it was about time you were making some new ties. It's all very simple, and I'll attend to all the details. All you have to do is to rest gently on my shoulder the rest of your life, and let me do the steering."

Saidee straightened up and turned herself away from him.

"There, I feel better, but I mustn't do it again. It was only because I was so overwrought and—and—"

"You don't mean that?" inquired Philip.

"Yes, I do mean it," Saidee replied; "but maybe not exactly in the way you think."

"But I can't understand," said Philip, "just how you know about all this. I thought I was going to be the first one to break the news to you. I hurried over here so early in order to arrive before you saw the papers. How did you come to find out?"

"I—I—I—was there," Saidee told him forlornly.

"When he was killed?" demanded Philip uncomprehendingly.

"No, but just before that."

"Wait a minute!" Philip's mind was trying to grasp the confusion of details. "McNab was killed about midnight, and I sent John Swift for you around eleven o'clock. Didn't he call for you?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you go with him?"

"Mr. McNab wouldn't let me. He sent word to Mr. Swift that I had gone home."

Philip knit his brows.

"What was the idea?"

Saidee blushed, and stood dumb and miserable.

"You mean to say that McNab—" Philip broke off his own sentence as comprehension of the situation flashed across his mind. "If I had known that, I would have killed him myself! I don't blame your father."

"But father didn't do it," protested Saidee. "He was waiting down-stairs to take me home. I sent for him earlier, be-

fore the Lieutenant-Governor locked me in the library. Daddy didn't know anything about it."

"But they found him in the room with McNab. He had broken down the door and got in," Philip argued. "He admits that himself."

In defense of her father, Saidee told Philip of the timely arrival of the man who had climbed in at the window, and who had liberated her from the clutches of the Lieutenant-Governor; but even as she told the story it sounded like a fabrication. She found that she was in confusion, even with her lover, who tried to believe her. The thought was galling. It gave her a premonition of how helpless she would feel making that same explanation before a court of law, unless she had a more solid tissue of facts to build upon.

She was talking when a messenger from the coroner arrived, summoning Saidee to an inquest to be held that afternoon. She mechanically acknowledged service of the notice, and then turned blankly to Philip.

"What shall I do?"

"Oh, just answer a few questions," Philip explained. "Tell when you last saw the deceased, what he was doing, and all that sort of thing."

A look of dismay crossed Saidee's face. It was going to be very difficult to tell all the details of her last interview with William McNab. It was going to be worse than difficult—it was going to be well-nigh impossible.

### XIII

THE coroner was an expeditious craftsman, and he hustled the inquest through in businesslike fashion. One of the two policemen who found the body was on the stand. His name was Tim Henderson.

"Who called you to the scene of the crime?" the witness was asked, after the usual preliminaries.

"Lieutenant-Governor McNab himself telephoned headquarters about twenty minutes before he was killed. He asked for a detail to arrest a suspicious character that he expected to call on him last night."

"Did he name the party?"

"No," the policeman responded. "At least his instructions were simply to look out for an old man with white hair who was slightly stooped."

Instantly every eye in the mortuary chapel, where the inquest was being held,

turned to the corner near the coroner's desk to verify the officer's description. Yes, the prisoner between the two policemen was an old man with white hair, and whether standing or sitting he always stooped a little.

"Tell me what happened when you arrived at the house."

"A man servant let us in," replied the witness. "He appeared to be frightened because there had been a racket going on in the library up-stairs."

"What kind of a racket?"

"He didn't say, sir. I didn't wait to inquire, either, but went right on up-stairs. It was easy to see where the trouble was. The door was locked, but it had been broken through—smashed in with a chair. We stepped inside. A man who looked like the chap we had been warned to arrest was there. He acted kind of dazed or something. Then we found the body of Lieutenant-Governor McNab by the fireplace. After that we notified the central office, and held the white-haired man until the inspector arrived with an ambulance surgeon. That's all, sir."

"Very well. Mr. Quarles, take the stand."

Quarles, the ascetic, rose with the dignity of a pilgrim father and signified that he was ready to answer questions.

"Tell your story of what occurred," suggested the coroner.

"After the other guests had gone, one of the young ladies asked if she might use the telephone. I took her to the instrument in the library up-stairs."

"Who was this young lady?" demanded the coroner.

"Her name was Miss McCall."

A breath of interest fluttered across the church-like calm of the room. The few women present looked at one another with inquiring eyes.

"Do you mean the daughter of the prisoner?" asked the coroner.

Quarles retained his impassivity.

"I don't know, sir. I'd never seen either of them before last night."

"Go on. What happened next?"

"I don't know, sir," Quarles cautiously responded. "A little later a gentleman called. He asked for Miss McCall, and I went to the library, where I had last seen her. I found—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted the coroner. "Who was the gentleman?"

"His name is Swift, I think. He was one of the guests who had been at the dinner-party earlier in the evening."

"Proceed."

"I found the door of the library closed. I knocked, and the Lieutenant-Governor answered. He told me to enter. I did so. Miss McCall had finished telephoning, and she and Mr. McNab were apparently having a quiet chat."

"Did you notice anything unusual about their attitudes toward each other? Why was the door closed?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Very well. Proceed."

"I told them that there was a gentleman down-stairs calling for Miss McCall, and—" He hesitated.

"What happened then?"

"My master told me to say that she had gone home," replied Quarles, finally overcoming his reluctance.

"Is that all?"

Quarles hesitated again.

"No, sir. As I left the room he made a signal that I was to close and lock the door after me from the outside."

A faintly audible murmur escaped the lips of the spectators. There was a rustling as the women again questioned one another with their eyes. The coroner probed the witness.

"You say that the Lieutenant-Governor made a sign. What do you mean by that? What kind of a sign?"

In reply, Quarles made an unintelligible gesture with his own hands.

"It was a signal he had used before. I've been in my present position for a long time, sir."

"I understand. Proceed."

"I locked the door, went down-stairs, and disconnected the library extension of the telephone."

"Why did you do that?"

"Mr. McNab had given orders that whenever he was in conference in the library he was not to be disturbed."

"But suppose there should be an important telephone call?"

"I was to answer it from down-stairs, sir, and use my own judgment."

"And if Mr. McNab wished to use the telephone himself?"

"There is a push-button on his desk. Two rings mean to connect the extension. I received that signal shortly after I had thrown off the switch."

"Do you know whom Mr. McNab was calling?"

"Yes—he told me to get police headquarters for him."

"Did you listen while he talked?"

"No, sir."

"What did you do?"

"With the other servants, I went about the business of cleaning up after the dinner-party. It was so late that we had no intention of finishing the work last night, but I wanted to make the rooms look presentable. While we were still thus engaged, I was called from my duties by another visitor."

"Who was that?"

"It was the white-haired gentleman sitting over there," Quarles indicated. "He said he had come for his daughter."

"How did he act?"

"I didn't notice anything peculiar about him."

"Was he flustered or excited?"

"Not that I noticed, sir."

"Very well. What did you do?"

"I asked him to wait in the drawing-room, and then I went up-stairs to the library. They were talking inside, so I rapped on the door, and Mr. McNab asked me what I wanted. I told him that Mr. McCall had come for his daughter. Mr. McNab said that he was to wait, and that I was not to interrupt them again. I went down-stairs and gave the message to Mr. McCall."

"What did he say?"

"I don't remember, sir, that he said anything—nothing of any importance, anyway. I left him in the drawing-room and went back to my room."

"What happened after that?"

"For quite a while nothing, sir. Then I began hearing sounds overhead."

"What kind of sounds?"

"It sounded a good deal like a quarrel. Once or twice I thought I heard some piece of furniture being turned over."

"You didn't go up-stairs to see what was the matter?"

"No, sir. I had been warned to keep away. For fear the other servants might think it was strange, I dismissed them all for the night. Most of them live outside of the house, in quarters over the garage. I went out there myself to see that none of them was disobeying orders. When I came back to the house, I heard a louder commotion going on up-stairs."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It was noisier, sir, and sounded more serious."

"What did it sound like?"

"Like somebody was smashing up the furniture. I could hear wood splintering and a good many blows."

"Why didn't you run up-stairs to the assistance of your master?"

"I had my orders to keep away, and I always obey orders."

"Then what?"

"I heard somebody beating on the front door, and I went there and let in the police. They proceeded up-stairs at once, and I went with them. We found that gentleman"—he pointed to Reeve McCall—"in the room, along with the body of my master."

Reeve McCall himself took the stand next, and corroborated the earlier details of the butler's testimony. The old man told of being aroused from his bed by a telephone-call from his daughter, who requested him to come over as soon as possible to the address which she gave him and escort her home. He had done so, and upon arrival had been received exactly as the butler had narrated.

He spoke of having heard noises up-stairs, which made him a trifle uneasy while he was waiting.

"What made you go up-stairs?"

"I heard the noise of a quarrel," the old man explained, "and I thought I could hear my own daughter's voice calling for help."

"So you decided to assault the Lieutenant-Governor of your State?"

"I had not decided upon any particular course. I am not a very strong man," McCall volunteered; "but I love my daughter. I thought she needed me," he added simply.

"Tell the jury exactly what you did after you got up-stairs," the coroner carefully instructed.

"I could hear voices behind one of the closed doors. I turned the knob, but it was locked."

"What did you do then?"

"I did nothing for several moments, but walked up and down the hall floor. I didn't know what to do. Finally the noise inside became so alarming that I could stand it no longer. I was sure that some injury was being done my daughter, so I broke down the door with a chair which

was standing in the hall. Before I got inside the noise had ceased, and when I stepped through the broken door there was no one in sight—not a soul, though I had heard the voices of at least two people only a few moments before. I feared the worst for my daughter, and I searched the room frantically for her; but she was gone. All that I found was the body of a man whom I had never seen before."

This concluded the salient points of the prisoner's story.

Saidee took the stand herself. She told her story briefly up to the point where the deceased Lieutenant-Governor had threatened her father and Steve Cline with ex-

posure if she refused to yield to his demands. About that she felt that she had no right to tell the truth. What could be gained by disclosing something which, now that the Lieutenant-Governor was dead, no one in the world knew except herself? To reveal that John Swift was really Steve Cline would be saddling him with a load of adverse public opinion which would forever close his career of honor. To tell that her father had once been a lawbreaker would only make his present situation more intolerable.

So Saidee decided to lie as only a woman can lie who is shielding some one near and dear to her.

*(To be continued in the April number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

### PAX AMERICANA

If she indeed should rear this flower  
That never bloomed on earth before—  
No armed neutrality of power,  
But peace on earth from shore to shore—  
Then blessed among the nations she,  
And mightier far than mighty Rome,  
Laying her wand on land and sea,  
And making earth one land, one home!

Not by the skilled mechanic brain  
Or swift device to passing ends,  
Not by some huge material gain  
A nation to the stars ascends;  
But to think nobly of the soul,  
To guard man's hard-wrung heritage—  
The holy spirit in the whole  
That upward toils from age to age;

That on and on through darkness runs,  
Bearing the mystic torch that brings  
A better brightness than the sun's—  
The deathless life in mortal things—  
That is the laurel that endures  
Beyond the soldier's vaunted bays;  
May this, America, be yours—  
May this be your eternal praise!

For man is weary of the sword,  
The blood-stained flags, the maniac strife,  
Glory that gilds all the abhorred  
Arts that make war on happy life.  
His heart a fairer vision fires,  
A better strife, a nobler goal;  
Not bread alone his soul desires—  
Something to satisfy the soul!

*Richard Le Gallienne*



# Calling River

THE STORY OF A LONG QUEST IN THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST

By Laurie York Erskine

**T**OM FRAZIER, the son of a Revelstoke blacksmith, clad in the scarlet of the Mounted, stood before the court at Edmonton, and by his evidence heaped a burden of guilt upon the brown-haired girl who sat there and heard his voice. It was all in the line of duty, but it was a very difficult duty to fulfil.

He had gone up to Chauvin, in the late days of May, to take old Locke. The old man was violent in his cups, and in such a fit of violence he had slain Bardeaux, the agent. Chauvin is a little below Fort McMurray, and McMurray is on a high shoulder of the Athabasca, so that the tragedy had occurred in virgin wilderness.

Frazier had found things exceedingly confused when he arrived there, and it was not without difficulty that he had made the arrest. Locke, very prudently, had gone away, and his house, a neat cabin in the midst of a well-cultivated clearing, was occupied by a lonely brown-haired girl who greeted him with unmistakable hostility. Bardeaux, the agent, had courted Locke's brown-haired daughter, and this had led to his death.

"He is not here," she had told Frazier evenly, as if she expected him to give up his search out of hand and return to Athabasca Landing.

He questioned her with an admirable impartiality, but obtained very little information. He went carefully over the field of the murder, examining gravely the cabin of Bardeaux, and, in spite of her hostility, the home of old Locke himself. She was always at his elbow while he did this work, and he was hampered exceedingly by her very evident influence over the Indians and half-breeds of the settlement. The only other white man at Chauvin—a school-teacher, who frankly adored the girl and was comically torn 'twixt love and duty—afforded him very little assistance.

His examination over, there was nothing for it but to settle down at Chauvin and keep a ceaseless watch for some clue that would betray the missing man's hiding-place. He spent long hours at Locke's homestead, and brought upon himself the antipathy of the entire settlement, without obtaining much information. Hazel Locke gave him no welcome when he came, and afforded him but cold hospitality in the days and evenings when he stayed. She would not leave the place while he was there. Companioned by a squat Indian woman, she hovered incessantly about him, watching every movement he made, and visiting upon him an inexpressible scorn.

It was a difficult situation for the awkward, boyish constable, yet Frazier met it admirably. Suffering the torture of a constant and almost overwhelming embarrassment, he cloaked it with an imperturbable and sphinx-like silence. When he spoke to the girl, it was with a cool and impersonal manner which met her scornful hostility half-way.

She, too, was admirable in her way. She was the daughter of a Minnesota farmer, and one must understand all womanhood to understand whence she derived the fine poise and dignity with which she faced this situation. She was unschooled in the subtleties of any more civilized society than is to be found in the crossroads settlement of the Northwest; yet she fashioned for herself her pedestal of womanhood, and very assuredly dwelt upon it.

Frazier, poor boy, tried to pump her; but she might have been a queen fending off some presumptuous peasant.

"He has gone to the woods," she said, with her brown eyes ridiculing him. "You will never find him. You might as well start out to find a fox or a squirrel. He has lived in the woods all his life. It's his business; he can live there and travel there

forever. He's traveling now, I suppose. Why don't you chase him? He's getting away from you while you're playing at *Nick Carter* here!"

She laughed a hard laugh and turned to her kitchen work. He, poor fellow, gave himself away, although I don't know that it mattered much. Indeed, it probably won his victory for him.

"You're right," he said. "Your dad can hide in the woods and travel through them forever; but he won't leave you behind. I'm going to stay here, and when he joins you, or you join him, I'm going to be there. You can't get away from that!"

She laughed again; but from that moment she became touched with the panic which finally proved to be her undoing. It forced her hand.

She met her father, soon after that, on the wooded bank of the river. In the nighttime she dropped down with the current in a heavy boat filled with provisions for a long trek through the forest, and landed at her father's signal fire. Frazier, who followed her in a little canoe under the black shadow of the bank, landed a little above them, so that he came upon them suddenly out of the woods.

Father and daughter were whispering together as if the very woods had ears, while they unloaded provisions from the boat and placed them with the old man's packs. They worked in great haste, not ceasing for a moment in the heart-breaking toil of unloading against time—work which the girl shared with the man.

Frazier found himself halting in the shadow of the brush, gazing guiltily upon the lithe form of the girl as she moved quickly and unaffectedly at her heavy task. Her face, as she tossed up her head to sweep back the wilful strands of hair, seemed clear and brave and like a young boy's in the light of the fire. Then he stepped forward, making straight for his man; and the two of them stood as if turned to stone.

"Ephraim Locke," said the constable, "you are under arrest for the murder of Émile Bardeaux. I must warn you that anything you say may be used against you;" and he stepped forward to snap the manacles upon the old man's wrists.

The girl uttered a terrible, wounded cry—a cry that Frazier was to remember all his life. She darted forward and strove to wrest the manacles from his hands; but he grasped her arm, hurting her so that she

winned, and her grip was torn from the handcuffs.

"Don't!" cried the old man. "For God's sake, don't resist, Hattie!"

He stood there, a tragic, helpless figure. The girl went spinning back, and Frazier followed her up, thinking that she was about to fall. She stumbled against the pile of duffel that lay beside the fire, and her hands fell upon the barrel of a rifle. He was close upon her when she turned it on him and pulled the trigger.

Again the old man cried out with a wail of despair.

"You've shot him!" he shrieked. "My God, you've shot him! There are two of us now!"

He came over, clawing at the redcoat's back, thinking he had to deal with a dead body; but Frazier, with a bullet through the flesh of his arm, and his side grazed, was pressing close upon the girl, tearing the rifle from her grasp. He wrenched it free. Then, picking up the manacles, he left her sprawling upon the duffel, and, turning on the old man, snapped the manacles over his wrists.

She arose slowly, a disheveled, broken Amazon, her hair in disarray, her clothing torn. Without a word, she set to mending her appearance, and then, still without a word, she joined Frazier and helped him dress the wounds she had inflicted.

## II

THE three of them made their way down the broad, swiftly moving river in the fragrant June weather; and they made a trio odd enough in the black river boat which bore them. Frazier became daily less useful as his wounded arm became sore from the use of it, and a little inflamed; so the work of the journey devolved upon his prisoners.

The old man took his part willingly enough, although the burden of guilt which he carried depressed him exceedingly, and his fear for the welfare of his daughter often moved him to silent tears. For her part, the girl reacted to her father's depression with an astonishing display of cheerfulness. She was wont to kiss away his tears and reassure him with a charming assumption of a legal knowledge which she did not possess. Her very pretenses delighted the old man, who, in playing with her, would completely forget the shadow that hovered above him.

Her attitude toward Frazier became friendly. Indeed, this was almost inevitable, since she dressed his wounds and acted generally as his lieutenant and adviser in every move the party made. She came to treat him with the cool tenderness that a nurse bestows upon her patient, and scolded him when he exerted himself, in the way which all women have for perverse mankind.

But the shadow was there, nevertheless. Frazier, seated amidships in silence and in pain, knew it, just as Hazel, cheerily wielding the heavy tiller, knew it; and as old Locke, fending a way for the boat with a great pole, and with the burden weighing down his scarred old heart, knew it, too.

One evening the two men sat at the camp-fire in the afterglow. Old Locke watched Frazier closely, while the young man, in his turn, watched the girl, who was busy at the river's brink. This was a trick which had grown upon Frazier well-nigh without his knowledge. No matter what their occupation might be, he found himself constantly looking at her.

From the rough garments which disfigured the women of the back blocks, her figure seemed to take a rugged, sturdy character which glorified and strengthened it. She ignored her unseemly clothes, and moved with a freedom akin to boyhood, which placed them at naught. Her lithe body and fine vitality triumphed over the ugly cloak.

Frazier gazed incessantly at her features across the camp-fires—at the curve of her throat and lips, at the little, almost imperceptible movement of her brow as she dealt with some problem of her housekeeping in the open. That delicate lift of the brown brows was a trick of hers, and Frazier found himself watching for it. When he saw it, he would smile.

He was aware of the habit that he had acquired, and often wondered at it. When he petulantly tried to overcome it, he found that he could not do so. It seemed as if she had enslaved his eyes, and he could not keep them away; but she gave no sign that she knew of it.

"I wish—" said the old man, and then was quiet.

He tried again, approaching the subject on a new tack.

"Would it be too much," he said, "to ask you to forget that affair up at Chauvin? I mean her resistance. She didn't mean to resist."

Frazier took his eyes from Hazel's figure.

"I have thought of that," he said. "But how can I explain the wounds? They're there, and they've got to be accounted for."

"That's what I wanted to speak to you about," Locke went on. "Why couldn't you say that I shot you? It would be a very little thing!" His eyes pleaded more abjectly than his tragic voice. "It will mean a jail sentence for her."

Frazier pondered this.

"Locke," he said, "do you know that your case is a hard one? You have killed a man. Hanging's the penalty for that; but you have extenuating circumstances in your favor. You will plead that Bardeaux had offered some insult to your daughter. All right! If you are further charged with firing on a policeman, your extenuating circumstances won't help you a bit."

"But you don't understand!" The old man spoke in a low voice which vibrated with passion. "Nothing like this has ever touched my daughter. She must not go to jail! You must not let her go to jail!" He arose to his feet, towering over the fire. "My God, I would kill you, Frazier! I would kill you!" He sank down once more. "But it's no use," he whispered, and his head sank into his hands.

Frazier was moved. He saw the girl approaching the fire, and he felt that he must have mercy upon this stricken man.

"Don't fear," he said. "I guess we can fix it."

That night he was racked with an agony of pain which caused him to moan in his blankets, and he found that he had no power in his wounded arm. Hazel came to him, bending over his bed, and knelt beside him while she undid the bandages. She scolded him while she worked, and he gritted his teeth, nearly fainting with the pain which possessed his body. Then the old man held a lantern while the wound was opened once more and cleaned. The bandages were restored, and she ordered him to sleep.

"Sleep, Tommy," she said, as a woman speaks to an injured child. "I am going to call you Tommy after this; and you must go to sleep. Sleep!"

She repeated the word with a quiet insistence; and after she was gone, he repeated it to himself again and again, remembering her voice. But he did not sleep, and in the morning he was raving in delirium; so she took command of the party, and

brought it in another day to Calling River settlement.

## III

FATHER CONSTANTINE, walking abroad upon the river bank in the profound peace of a June evening, first saw the voyagers, and his call brought several of his flock to assist them in landing. The benevolent *curé* himself helped old Locke to bring the delirious redcoat up the bank, and he made a bed for him in his own cabin, treating his wounds immediately. Hazel Locke came to the bedside unbidden and took her place as nurse without a word, while her father made provision for their stay.

It was fortunate that they had reached the settlement before night fell, because Frazier's wound was in a bad way, and another night in the woods might have had grave consequences. As it was, Father Constantine treated it skilfully. He lanced it, cleansed it out, and dressed it with poultices of proven potency. He prevailed upon the tortured boy to sleep, although he had to sit beside the bedside all night to achieve this end.

Several days passed before Frazier's brain was clear. With the return of his senses came the memory of a clear spring night, when the air had been filled by the cadences of singing birds and the fragrance of new blossoms; when the voice of a girl had sounded in his ears, bidding him sleep. He called out her name, and the good father came to him with a peaceful face which was rest and refreshment to his tired brain; but the girl's voice still rang in his ears.

"I'm going to call you Tommy," she had said.

He felt like a little boy, sick abed; and he wanted her.

"Hazel!" he said, smiling at the *curé*. "Where is she? I want her."

So Father Constantine sent for her, and she came to speak with Frazier. He gazed at her as she sat beside the bed, devouring her with his eyes. He listened to her voice. When she was gone, he longed for her again, and he was not happy until she returned. He loved her!

When he rose from the bed he found that he had not strength to pursue his journey immediately, as he had planned. Pursue it he must, for he was trained in the code of the Northwest Mounted Police. It was his only training, and its standard was his only standard. Love was singing strangely

in his heart, and the presence of the girl tormented him with the embodiment of his desire; but the job in hand was to deliver Locke at Edmonton. While he wore the scarlet, the job was his life—the reason for which he lived.

When the significance of his work dragged upon his mind, accusing him of turning her father over to the hangman, he put it from him. He fended off the shadow which would not depart—the end of the journey, the futility of his desire.

Hazel smiled upon him. He looked upon her, longing to reach out and touch her garment; and she smiled, encouraging him.

The evening came before they were to resume their journey.

He walked with her at the brink of the river that evening, and the stillness of it was a benediction. They were bathed with the quiet air, caressed by the fragrance of the woods. As they strolled there, Hazel fondled a spray of fresh wild blossoms; Frazier was lost in a silent regard of the swift gray waters of the Athabasca.

His mind was in a turmoil, swayed by the desire in his heart; and suddenly it spilled forth in words, as a pot boils over. He turned upon her, one arm in a sling, the other, fist clenched, at his side. His face was very white. Reason, and the work in hand, departed from him. His mind and his body were lost in a babble of words.

"I love you! I want you!" he repeated in a strange voice which well-nigh choked him. That was all he could say—"I want you! I love you!"

With a catch in her breath she stood back, gazing upon him. Through long days she had been planning for this, acting for it, scheming for it, preparing herself for the moment when she must meet it; but the situation had got away from her.

She had not expected such a torrent of passionate feeling. It overwhelmed her, it battered down the foundations of her determined purpose. She tried to carry out her plan, but her words were not the words she had intended to use, her manner was not the manner she had rehearsed. Her voice, too, failed her, and she blurted the thing out.

"You want me?" she said, but she could not look at him as she had planned.

He rattled on. He would give the world for her—everything in the world.

"Everything?" she whispered, feeling like a swimmer in the rapids; yet she strug-



gled to pursue her course. "You would give the world for me?" She flung up her head, nerving herself for it. "Then give me my father!" she cried. "Give me him and his freedom! Let me go away with him!" Her voice dropped low, and she drew close to him, laying a hand upon his shoulder. The blossoms had fallen to the ground. "You can have me for that," she said.

He gazed down upon her, horrified, but she could not see that, having her head bent down upon his breast. Then he tore her hand from his shoulder and pushed her roughly away. He stammered and stuttered. He had no words to express what he thought; but his disgust and horror was apparent. He pushed her roughly from his path.

"Go!" he said thickly, turning to her before he strode away. "Go away with your father—go to the States. I'll wait that long, here at Calling River. You two go on away!"

And he was off along the river trail.

#### IV

HAZEL stood for a moment looking after him—looking at the trees that swayed about her; at the running water; at the soft evening sky. She was vainly striving for words. It seemed as if she was bereft of her voice and of her senses, as if she was struck dumb, bewitched.

Then her eyes caught the flash of scarlet down the river trail. Unreasoning, she flew after it, chasing Frazier wildly. She clutched his tunic, seized him by his belt, and clung to him; but it was not hard to make him stop.

"Listen!" she cried. "Listen! You've got to listen to me!"

"What do you want?" he asked her.

She stared into his face, her head swaying dumbly, as one who mourns.

"This is it," she said. "Listen! You don't know women—the things they think and the ways they have. You may think you do, but you don't. What I said back there was wrong. I didn't mean it!"

She stopped for a moment, conscious that she was again pursuing the wrong course.

"When you took that gun away from me, and I set to work bandaging you up, you thought I'd got to like you, didn't you? Well, I hadn't. I hated you, because you'd arrested dad, and dad is all I have. I hated you, but I set out to get you to fall in love

with me, so that I'd have something you wanted—something I could trade off to you for dad!"

He made some inarticulate sound of protest. She flared up at it.

"That was fair enough!" she cried. "He's my dad, and I argued myself into it. I said it was fair enough. I was willing to do it—but I can't!"

He was looking at her, regarding her steadily, devouring every movement of her features.

"Oh, I love you!" he said.

"And I love you, too!" she responded eagerly. "That's what I want to tell you. I couldn't go through with it. I knew that before ever I started out to speak. The thing must go on now. That's dad's life, not yours or mine. It must go on. We two can't stop it, or care for it, or let it hinder us!"

He had her in his arms now. Her lithe, firm body was in his grasp. His free arm pressed her to his breast; her hair and the scent of it was in his face. She was his! Her body was his, her heart and soul were his!

Father Constantine came upon them as they emerged from the river trail, and his wise old face was troubled.

"But, *monsieur*!" he exclaimed. "Is not this girl your prisoner?"

Tom Frazier gazed at him for a moment in silence.

"She is mine!" he cried. "She is my wife!"

And in that still June night, at Calling River, under Father Constantine's kind eyes, they two were married.

Their honeymoon was short and very strange. It was a few days of forest trail, all too short and too much filled with the routine of camp and travel, from Calling River to Lac La Biche. At the lake settlement they procured a wagon, and with a constable of the post made their way overland to Edmonton.

From the moment when they arrived at Lac La Biche, Frazier's romance was resolutely put from him. He was a constable in from the back blocks with his prisoners.

In those few precious days on the woodland trail they had argued many things, and one of these had been the old man's precarious position. She had discovered the plot which Tom had hatched with her father, and immediately opposed it.

"It might be the very thing that would decide the verdict," she cried. "It might hang him! Have we suffered so much, and labored so much to rid our minds of devils, only for me to seek freedom at the expense of my father's hanging?"

He would have reminded her of herself and himself, of love and happiness; but there was the hideous fact. To cast the burden of his wounds upon the old man would blast the extenuating circumstances beyond redeeming.

"I must take the consequences," she said. "If you don't tell the truth of it, I will!"

There was that in her eyes, as she said it, which Frazier had seen by the firelight on the night of the arrest.

So Tom Frazier, the son of the Revelstoke blacksmith, stood there in the courtroom and bore witness against her, praying that she might not look up or cry out. He bore witness against her manfully, with his hands gripping at the railing; and those who heard him never knew what was moving in his mind, although he felt that it must be patent to all the world.

They gave the case to the jury, while she sat there with her brown head bowed. Frazier was rent with self-reproach and self-contempt. Her father had gone over the road for fourteen years. Sentence had been pronounced upon him the week before, and Tom knew that it meant death to the old man.

Now the verdict had been rendered, and she rose to face the judge, throwing back her head and gazing upward bravely.

"Two years."

The sentence was pronounced with all the impersonal dignity of the Dominion's courts. Frazier stood rigid, his life stood still, suspended for an eternity there at the varnished rail. For two years he must wait. He could not live again for seven hundred and thirty days!

She strode forth without tears, and with her head erect; and in company with Lloyd, a fellow constable, he conducted her to prison. He strove to guess what was in her heart; but she gave no sign until the jail was reached and the moment come when she must leave him.

Then he wanted to cry out and claim her before all the world as his own; but she was turned upon him, gazing with her brown eyes into his—gazing into his eyes with love and pride and pity.

Lloyd left them for a moment, and Frazier found that she was speaking to him in a low, even tone.

"I know what is in your mind, dear," she was saying; "but don't speak of it. Two years is an eternity; yet it is very short. Live for me and love me all the time!"

She held out a hand, and very formally he took it; but he longed for her body in his arms again and her heart against his.

"Good-by," he mumbled.

"Good-by!" She swayed a little toward him, but did not give way. "Good-by. I'm sorry—for you. I pity you!"

And, turning, she was gone into the building with Lloyd, while Tom stood gazing at the blank, closed door.

#### ATTAR OF ROSES

UPON my lips thy last kiss lies,  
As if a rose  
Still pressed them close,  
And with its breath dizzied my eyes.

Within my heart thy voice still clings,  
Like some far bird  
In boyhood heard,  
And still in fancy sings and sings.

Within my hand thy hand is pressed,  
A fluttering dove;  
And still, fair love,  
I breathe the sweetbrier of thy breast!

Nicholas Breton

# Cabbages and Queens

LIGHT AND SHADOWS OF LIFE IN A COMMONPLACE QUARTER  
OF NEW YORK

By Elmer Brown Mason

MABEL WALLACE stepped out of the door of the tiny grocery and came around in front of the window. There was a bare five-foot length of it. Against the pane was ranged a row of cabbages, all the same size. Then came a line of carrots, carefully washed, their tops pointing upward. Above them, in the center, were five green peppers flanked on either side by onions, their red and yellow parchment coverings subtly suggestive of fervent riches within.

One onion was not quite so round as its fellows, and Miss Wallace turned back into the shop to replace it by a more symmetrical specimen. She selected a fine red one from a basket and came back toward the door. The figure of her sister-in-law blocked the way.

"Won't them cabbages fade?" she asked sharply.

"No, they won't—not till the sun gets across the street; and then they don't fade—they dry up," Mabel answered. "I'm goin' to put breakfast-food packages in place of 'em this afternoon."

"You waste a lot o' time fixin' the store up like one of them dago places," Mrs. Wallace continued.

"That's my business," came the acid retort.

"Well, I guess it's my business to see that the person my husband pays ten dollars a week to—and she his own sister, who'd ought to work for nothin'—don't waste the time he's payin' her for! Why ain't you settin' in the back of the store and sewin', genteel-like? If you made your own clothes, you wouldn't have to have so much money."

"If a certain party," said Mabel Wallace, her voice vitriolic, "who used to wait table in a cheap restaurant would do some

of the cookin' at home, 'stead of throwin' all the work on my back, I *might* have time to make my own clothes! If a certain party who never had nothin' before she married didn't throw money around like a—like a chorus-girl, *p'raps* my brother could pay my wages and not owe me eighty dollars for eight weeks' work!"

"If a certain party," retorted Mrs. Wallace, her voice maddeningly calm, "hadn't give the J. A. Simpsons credit for ninety-two fifty-six, p'raps my husband wouldn't have to skimp his wife on what she has a right to!"

"The J. A. Simpsons has just gone away for the summer—they'll pay," Mabel said, but her voice carried no conviction, and she realized that the argument had gone against her.

"Gimme ten dollars out o' the till. I got to get some things," suggested Mrs. Wallace, her intonation giving no indication that she was making a preposterous demand.

Mabel gave her a furious glance and opened her mouth to refuse. Then she shut it again. It would only mean another scene. When John Wallace came in from making his morning deliveries, he would give his wife what she asked for, without even a sigh.

The girl walked behind the counter and got the money.

"Thank you for what's mine," snapped her sister-in-law, and walked slowly out of the store.

Mabel picked up the onion again and moved forward to put it in the window. She had rather admired her arrangement of the vegetables before her sister-in-law had come in, but now the exhibit struck her as silly. For a moment she was moved to sweep them all into one heap.

Through the open door came the noises of the street—the thunderous roar of an Elevated train grinding to a stop at Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue; the buzz of passing automobiles; the sharp rattle of street-cars; the long-drawn-out “Ra-a-a-ags, ol’ ra-a-ags!” of an itinerant junk-buyer. Then came a call that made the girl stiffen with resentment:

“Oranges! Oranges! Nice-a sweet da orange!”

“Another of them dagos—a new one,” Mabel Wallace said aloud.

Her ears, attuned to the various hucksters’ voices, had failed to recognize this call. Italians were sifting into the quarter, and their itinerant venders cut into the none too secure trade of the small grocery. The wagon, heralded by the “Nice-a sweet da orange!” turned from a side street into Greenwich Avenue. The fruit was arranged on boards sloping upward, so as to make a great golden wedge in the middle of the vehicle. By its side walked, or rather slouched, its owner, a small son of the south clothed in dingy, nondescript garments, his sole touch of color a flaming red necktie.

Once more the virtues of the oranges were extolled in a voice that carried a full block, and then the Italian left his charge and peered in at the grocery window, flashing Mabel a brilliant smile through the glass. He turned and entered the door.

“How much da carrot?” he asked, beaming upon her.

“Eight cents a bunch,” Mabel answered in resentful tones, raising the price a penny for this particular customer.

“Seven?” pleaded the Italian, his smile more brilliant than ever.

The girl picked out the smallest bunch from those piled behind her, then changed it for a fairer-sized one. The Italian paid over the money and showed a disposition to linger.

“Good, da window!” He indicated Mabel’s display with an approving wave of his hand. “Ver’ good!”

“Glad you like it,” Mabel answered, softening to his smile and flattered in spite of herself.

There was a little pause.

“Grazie, signorina!” He flashed his white teeth at her, then added in farewell: “Ain’t it a helluva life? Go’-by!”

“My land, what impudence!” the girl said aloud.

Nevertheless, as she turned back into the shop she was smiling.

## II

At noon John Wallace’s little delivery-wagon drew up to the curb and the grocer got out. He was a small, quick-moving man, the pucker of anxiety between his eyes common with those who do business on a limited capital. A sharp glance around the shop, and he greeted his sister:

“Window looks fine, Mabe. Any mail?”

“No—nothin’ from the J. A. Simpsons,” the girl answered quickly, divining his thoughts. “They’ll pay, though,” she added defiantly, her lips tightening at the remembrance of her sister-in-law’s words.

“Sure, they’ll pay,” John Wallace agreed. “I wish they’d come through now, though. I’d like to buy some eggs. They’re goin’ up.”

Mabel made no comment, but busied herself with the order-slips her brother had brought in, preparatory to making up packages for the afternoon delivery trip. John Wallace opened the cash-register and began counting the contents. After five minutes he spoke:

“I may be wrong”—his tone was deprecating, but not without a trace of anxiety—“but the register seems to be out ten dollars an’ two cents.”

“The two cents is for a stamp. I wrote the J. A. Simpsons again,” Mabel answered.

“I s’pose I didn’t count right for the ten dollars?” the grocer queried.

“Nope—you did count right,” Mabel said, keeping her voice toneless. “Mary come an’ got it.”

“Oh! Well, it’s all right, of course,” the little man answered quickly.

Business was brisk that afternoon. The carrots had all been sold before the sun crossed the street and made friendly excursions into the window of the tiny grocery. The breakfast-food packages brought a wholly unexpected run on that particular brand. When it was time for John Wallace to go on his afternoon delivery trip, he bemoaned with false grief the probable necessity of an extra call on the wholesalers in a day or two.

Mabel was left alone in the shop until he returned at five o’clock. At nearly the same minute a big man, hatless and wearing an immense apron, once white, entered.

“Afternoon, Mr. Kortz,” the girl greeted him, reserve in her tone.



"You look fine," he answered genially. "I do like big wimens—womans. You look fine! I want a cabbage an' five pound sugar. Say, why shouldn't you an' me an' your brother an' his wife go to the movies to-night?"

"Nope—gotta work," Mabel answered shortly. "P'raps John an' Mary can go—not me."

"It's you I want," the big man answered with a frown. "You threw me down once, many times."

"Oh, say, I guess you can go, Mabe." John Wallace came to the front of the store. "Don't make Mr. Kortz think I'm one of them there slave-drivers."

"Nope—can't go to-night," Mabel stated positively.

"Vell, if you won't, you won't. I ask again, though. I ask an' ask," the big man repeated with obstinacy in his voice—an obstinacy that almost carried a threat.

"You'll find that there cabbage just fine," the grocer stated enthusiastically, anxious to break the tension.

At six o'clock Mabel left the store and climbed two flights of stairs to the flat above, to prepare the evening meal. When the girl entered, Mrs. Wallace was sitting in a rocking-chair, sewing on a silk blouse, her feet stretched well out in front of her and encased in a pair of new shoes obviously a little tight.

"Did you bring up any of them carrots?" she greeted Mabel. "They say they're good for the complexion."

"Sold every bunch," the girl stated shortly.

"You might 'a' saved one," Mrs. Wallace retorted, easing her feet by drawing them up and stretching them out again. "You wouldn't never think of no such thing, though, not you!"

Mabel let this statement go unchallenged, and busied herself in the tiny kitchen, getting dinner. She felt that she hated her sister-in-law as much as she knew the former waitress disliked her. The atmosphere was tense.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Wallace had to have some one to talk to. She came into the kitchen just as Mabel was putting the last touches on the meal.

"How was business this afternoon?" she asked.

"Good," Mabel answered briefly.

"I'm glad of that. John won't miss that ten dollars, then. Gee, but things is

expensive! I had an awful time gettin' the kind o' shoes I had to have, for the money."

"You got 'em too tight—as usual," Mabel remarked acidly.

"You mind your own business!" the woman shot back.

There were steps on the stairway, and John Wallace entered.

"I put a sign on the door, 'Positively back in ten minutes,'" he said genially. "So you can have time to eat a good dinner, Mabe."

His wife flew to him and put her arms around his neck.

"You're awful thoughtful, deary," she said. "I allers 'preciate your kindness, if others don't." She glanced at Mabel over her shoulder. "Anythin' interestin' happen this afternoon?"

"Well, no," the little man said happily, giving his wife back her kiss. "Business was good. Oh, yes—that old beau of yours, Kortz, come in, an' wanted to take Mabe to the movies. He wanted to take all of us, but she threw him down."

"Wanted to take all of us?" repeated the woman. "An' she threw him down?"

"Sure I did," interjected Mabel calmly. "I'll do it again, too. I ain't goin' with no Hun."

"He ain't no Hun, even if he was born a German—an' he can't help that," retorted the woman furiously. "Didn't he put 'To hell with the Kaiser' on his store window durin' the war, an' refuse to sell sausages? I s'pose you got so many rich fellers after you that you can turn him down—I don't think!"

"I don't see what it is to you," snapped the girl.

"You don't, don't you? Well, he'd 'a' taken us all to the movies and to supper afterwards. Lot o' pleasures I have that you should—oh, oh, oh!"

She flung herself out of the room in tears. Her husband followed her, after an angry glance at Mabel. The girl slipped a piece of meat between two pieces of bread and went down-stairs to the grocery.

### III

THE next morning Mabel built up the front of the grocery window with brilliantly wrapped cakes of soap. Behind the soap lay a tumbled field of sweet corn, splashed with bunches of crimson radishes. The effect pleased her very much. Of course, the corn would have to come out in the

afternoon, when the sun got across the street, but then its place could be taken by cucumbers.

John Wallace went off early in his delivery-wagon, to replenish his stock from the wholesalers. Hardly had he left when Mary entered the store, her feet still in bedroom slippers, a dressing-sack in lieu of waist.

"Where's my husband?" she asked.

"You know just as well as I do he's gone to the wholesale houses," Mabel answered.

"Now what do you know about that? I'd clean forgot," Mary Wallace exclaimed pleasantly. "Well, you'll do just as well. Gimme five dollars out o' the till. He said I could have it."

"John took all the money except two dollars in silver, and I need that for change," Mabel answered, trying to keep the triumph out of her voice.

"Gimme it out o' your pocket, then," suggested Mrs. Wallace.

"How do you expect me to have any money, when I ain't been paid for nine weeks?" retorted Mabel.

"There's a sale of waists at Gimbel's, and I got to get there before all the best ones is gone," her sister-in-law pleaded. "You know you got some money, Mabel—you allers have."

"How do you expect me to have any money when I ain't been paid?" repeated Mabel.

"If you hadn't give your friends, the J. A. Simpsons, all their groceries, you'd 'a' been paid," Mrs. Wallace said furiously, falling back on her Gibraltar.

She flounced out of the shop. Mabel watched her go, a wintry smile finally making the smallest of curves in the straight line of her lips.

A customer entered, was served, and departed. Then the door opened to the ample figure of Kortz. He was without his apron, dressed even to coat and hat.

"I want to talk to you serious, Mabel," he began, in bullying tones which instantly became pleading at the expression on the girl's face. "Say, why do you treat me so mean?"

"I don't treat you any different from anybody else, Mr. Kortz," Mabel answered. "You're indifferent to me," she added.

"Indifferent! That's just what I ain't," the big man said earnestly. "Looka here, Mabel—why can't me and you fix it up? I got a lot of money, and I'm a goin' to

have a lot more. You could dress swell—sweller than I ever dressed my wife that died."

"I ain't goin' to marry no widower for clothes," stated the girl flatly.

"Don't make your mind up already now," he pleaded. "I'd treat you right."

"Ain't a thing doin', Mr. Kortz," the girl said cheerfully.

"Well, you ain't the only one," the man retorted angrily. "I ain't so hated by womens. Your sister-in-law, she wasn't so cold to me once!"

"Why didn't you marry her before John did?" the girl asked, wishing in her heart that he had.

"She wasn't no worker like you—not big enough," the man explained simply. "I like big womens."

The entrance of a customer put an end to Kortz's wooing, and he departed. Mabel looked after him speculatively. After all, why wouldn't it be a good thing to marry him? She knew she could manage him—after one good fight. Wouldn't it be better than working in her brother's grocery-store for a salary that was always in arrears? And she would be freed from her sister-in-law—that was no small consideration.

She tried to imagine what life would be like with Mr. Kortz—a comfortable flat, the best of things to eat, clothes, movies. She could snub Mary Wallace, who would have to take it out on somebody else. That was just it! The somebody else would be her brother—he needed her. It was really due to her efforts that the little grocery business held together at all.

There came a clang of bells outside, a rush of feet along the pavement. A red fire-patrol wagon dashed by, then a great truck and ladder. Mabel went to the door and watched them turn north on Seventh Avenue.

There followed a dog-fight across the street. Then peace settled back on Greenwich Avenue, save for the never-ceasing undertone, the muted voice of the great city.

Mabel turned back into the shop, and hesitated. A huckster was calling cabbages, and she listened to catch the price. The voice came nearer—she recognized it. The price called was two cents a head less than she was asking.

A wagon turned into Greenwich Avenue. It was piled to a pyramid with cabbages,

and beside it walked the little Italian of the day before. He stopped the horse at the curb, met the girl's eyes, and, removing his hat with a flourish, headed for the door, through which Mabel retreated.

"Good!" He indicated the window with a wave of his hand. "You like-a everythin' pretty, *si?*"

"What can I do for you?" Mabel asked coldly.

"Da rad', da red rad'," the small man answered, settling on the radishes, after glancing around the store. "Like-a your lip!"

"Don't give me none of your impudence," the girl snapped.

"Forgive!" He flashed her a brilliant smile, totally unabashed. "Forgive, but she is red!"

Mabel opened her mouth for bitter words, then shut it again, and, in spite of herself, laughed. The Italian laughed with her.

"Say, how do you get them cabbages so cheap that you can sell 'em at that price?" she asked.

"Da beeg boss, he buy 'em—I only sell. He buy a lot. Send out twenty, maybe thirty wagons."

"Oh, I see! You get a salary, then?"

"No—sell on da comish. I make twenty dollar for him, he give me five dollar."

"Why don't you go into business for yourself?" the girl demanded, her frugal soul revolting at the division of profits.

"Ah!" He shrugged his shoulders nearly to the top of his head. "I no gotta da mon'. I no gotta da horse, da mon', for start."

"You're trying to get it, though?" she interrogated.

Again he shrugged his shoulders.

"What da use? If I had a woman, *si*. If I get a fine woman with da mon'—hundred dollar—I make-a da mon' for her. You gotta da mon'?" he queried, an impudent twinkle in his bright eyes.

"You get out o' here, an' don't you dare come back!" Mabel said furiously.

"I see you to-morrow," the Italian answered calmly. Then he flashed all his teeth in one beaming smile. "Ain't it a helluva life? Go-by!"

#### IV

A SUDDEN wave of prosperity came to the little grocery during the next three days. John Wallace was lucky in his buy-

ing, and each evening found the stock in need of replenishment. A heavy investment in eggs, which took practically all his capital, proved most fortunate. The price rose from thirty-eight to fifty-two cents. Mabel received half of the arrears of salary due her, and frugally placed the forty dollars with the ninety she already had in the bank.

Every one of these three days, in the slack hour between four and five, the little Italian came to the store and made some trifling purchase. The girl learned that his name was Angelo, and acquired a good deal of information in regard to the huckster trade. The third day he brought her a big scarlet geranium in a very small pot.

"Like-a da lip," he announced, presenting it with a bow.

"You got a nerve!" she answered, but she was pleased in spite of herself.

"Good-a mon' in da flower," he commented. "You buy eleven cents, sell thirty-five."

"Why don't you try a wagon-load?" she asked practically.

"No got da mon'," he beamed upon her.

"Look here, Angelo!" she said sharply. "You been makin' five to eight dollars a day. You ain't goin' to tell me you ain't saved a cent? How much money you actually got?"

"Six dollar thirty cent," the little Italian answered. "Ain't it a helluva life?" he added genially.

"What do you do with your money?" Mabel demanded, appalled at such a lack of thrift. That a young man engaged in business should not try to acquire capital was something utterly incomprehensible to her frugal soul.

"Ah!" Angelo waved his hand in a gesture of pride. "I American. I eat good. I go to da picture. I play-a da card!"

"You play cards?" Mabel repeated, seizing on the lost item on the list. "You let fellers take your money away from you like a—like a boob?"

"I got to learn." Angelo smiled at her. "I ain't gotta da woman. If I gotta da woman, I save-a da mon'," he added insinuatingly.

"If I ain't disturbin' you and your friend, I'd like some sugar for my afternoon tea," came Mrs. Wallace's voice.

The man and the girl started guiltily. They had not heard the grocer's wife come into the store.

"Here's your change," Mabel said, handing the Italian thirty-five cents that she did not owe him. "Good morning!"

"*Grazie*," Angelo answered, catching his cue instantly.

Flashing his brilliant smile at both women, he went out.

"What have you to say for yourself?" demanded Mary Wallace. "Flirtin' durin' workin' hours, and with a dago!"

"I ain't got nothin' to say for myself. It's none of your business, and I wasn't flirtin'," Mabel answered.

"Oh, you wasn't, wasn't you?" retorted her sister-in-law. "Well, what do you call it, then? What do you think Kortz, who you been after so hard, would say if he seen you talkin' to a dirty dago?"

It is not an expression generally attributed to the fair sex—not even in fiction; but what Mabel actually said was:

"Damn Kortz!"

Moreover, she said it as if she meant it.

"That's nice!" replied Mrs. Wallace.

"Cursin' your own brother's wife! Don't give me that bulk sugar—I want lumps."

"If you think I'm a goin' to break a package of lump sugar for you, you're mistaken," Mabel answered, her voice trembling with fury.

"If you know what's good for you—you and your dago friend," Mary Wallace answered, "you'll give me lump sugar without further argument!"

Mabel's self-control went to pieces like a shattered wine-glass.

"You get out o' here!" she fairly shouted. "You get out o' here, or I'll slap you up to a peak!"

## V

"SHE cursed me—wouldn't give me no sugar—threatened to slap me!" sobbed Mary Wallace in her husband's arms.

"You sure you ain't mistaken, deary?" the little grocer protested. "It ain't like Mabel to do that."

"You goin' to call me a liar?" his wife demanded, and sobbed harder than ever.

"Mabe! Mabe!" the grocer called. The girl came in from the kitchen. "What's this I hear about you usin' bad language to Mary?"

"I did, an' I'll do it again," the girl stated viciously. "She's got to lay off o' me!"

"She wouldn't give me no sugar!" contributed her sister-in-law.

"That ain't no way to act, Mabe," put in John Wallace.

"If you don't like the way I act, I can go somewhere else," the girl retorted.

"She said she'd slap me up to a peak!" interjected Mrs. Wallace.

"I'll have to do without you if you can't be perlite to Mary," the sorely tried man answered.

There is nothing bitterer than a family quarrel. Mabel demanded her arrears of wages. Mrs. Wallace mentioned the J. A. Simpson account. From that time on the conversation was exclusively between the two women. John Wallace finally fled down to the peace of the grocery-store.

On the following morning there had been a reconciliation of sorts between brother and sister, but Mabel was still bitter. Even the task of ranging boxes of strawberries—bought at a marvelous bargain—in the grocery window failed to comfort her.

Strangely enough, it was not from her sister-in-law's shrewishness that she was suffering. It was her brother's insinuation that he could do without her that hurt most. Her pride was wounded to the quick.

Men were a fine lot, she didn't think! Yes, all of them. She'd sure give Angelo the gate if he came that day! Hadn't he been the cause of it all—the grinning little dago who hadn't sense enough to save a cent?

The strawberries were all sold, save a single box, when John Wallace departed for his afternoon deliveries at three o'clock. A moment later the postman left two letters, and Mabel carried them back to lay on the cash-register. The return address in the corner of one of them arrested her eyes. With a thrill of anticipation she tore it open, and she gazed with triumph on the blue slip of paper within. It was a money-order for ninety-two dollars and fifty-six cents, and the sender's name was J. A. Simpson.

"How much-a da strawberry?" came Angelo's voice from behind her.

The girl turned quickly, bitter words ready on her lips. Before she could utter them, the little Italian spoke again.

"How much-a da strawberry, *signorina*?" he repeated.

"What's the matter?" she asked sharply. Angelo's voice was mournful as a dirge. "What's the matter?" she asked again, noting the absence of his usual smile, the general droop of his whole body.



"Gotta da bounce," he answered, looking at her with mournful eyes.

"You mean you got fired?" she queried sharply.

"Gotta da bounce," he repeated.

"What are you goin' to do," she asked, quickly reviewing the fact that he was dependent on the horse and wagon lent him by "da boss" for his daily bread.

"Digga da ditch," he retorted.

"Be a common laborer, after bein' a—a merchant?" she exclaimed, horrified.

"I ain't gotta da mon'," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Can't you borrow some money?" she demanded.

For sole answer he shrugged his shoulders again.

Mabel gazed at him in dismay. He raised mournful eyes to hers. It came over the girl that they were very beautiful eyes, like a puppy-dog's that had once played about the grocery.

"Look here," she began, gulping with surprise at what she knew she was going to say. "I'll lend you enough money so's you can get a wagon an' some goods to sell. You can pay me back later—with interest."

The whole expression of the little man's face changed. He drew himself up proudly.

"I no take-a da mon' from da woman," he answered superbly. "No, I digga da ditch. Ain't it a helluva life?" he ended, as if dismissing the whole matter.

"But I want you to take it," Mabel cried in real distress. "What's the difference if I *am* a woman!"

"You ain't *my* woman," he said softly.

Mabel looked at him with frightened

eyes. His own, more like a pleading puppy-dog's than ever, gazed mournfully back at her. The world began to whirl. She opened her mouth to speak, then shut it again.

"I wanta you so ver' much!" he said suddenly.

"You—want—me?" she repeated, the words like a lash on her heart.

She turned with a gasp, walked to the till, slipped the J. A. Simpson money-order within, and took out forty dollars in cash. For a moment she hesitated, then she came back to him.

"I dunno if I love you," she said, more to herself than to him; "but I know I can't bear to have anythin' hurt you. I'm goin' with you," she continued in a firmer voice. "I'm goin' to marry you an' take care of you!"

Together they passed out of the shop. The man waited a moment while she locked the door, and then fell into step by her side. He guided her around the corner and stopped before a wagon loaded with pot upon pot of flaming geraniums.

"I own-a da wag', I own-a da flower, I own-a da mon'!" Angelo dragged a great handful of bills from his pocket. "Three hundred five dollar. You no go back?" he queried anxiously.

Mabel was staring at him dumbly.

"You no go back?" he pleaded. "I want-a you so!"

A flood of sunshine came down upon the flowers, which seemed to turn to it, as if in greeting. The girl raised her head beneath it and looked into the little Italian's eyes.

"No, I ain't goin' back," she said simply.

### THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE

A NEEDLE'S very small, I know;  
But still, if one should take  
It from a sewing-woman, lo,  
No dresses could she make!

Another little thing's a pen,  
Yet it may cause a plight  
If taken from a poet—then  
No verses could he write!

A heart is tiny, I agree;  
But I have known no rest  
Since you and I have met, for see,  
You stole it from my breast!

Harold Seton

# Judith of Bohemia\*

A STORY OF ARTISTIC AND THEATRICAL LIFE IN LONDON

By Coralie Stanton and Heath Hosken

Authors of "Called to Judgment," "The Book of Ethel," "The Buried Torch," etc.

JUDITH GRANT is an artists' model in Soho, London's Bohemian quarter. She lives with Clarissa Morley, nicknamed Chummy, a girl whose mind has been unbalanced by the disappearance of the man she loved, Alan Steyne. When Alan returns, Judy hopes that his presence will restore her friend's memory; but Clarissa does not recognize him, and soon Alan falls in love with Judy. Then Clarissa has a severe illness. As she recovers, her memory comes back to her, and she rushes into Alan's arms, declaring her love.

Alan, however, vows to Judy that he loves only her; but she—although she finds, to her own horror, that she cannot help returning his affection—is loyal to her friend, and tells him that he is in honor bound to marry Clarissa.

Judy has other admirers. One is an old friend, an artist named Bastien Dumont. Another is Bruce Gideon, the millionaire patron of Vincent Stornaway, a fashionable painter for whom she is posing. Gideon promises her a career as a dancer, and in his ornate rooms on Mount Street she dances before M. Guarvenius, a famous Polish teacher, who undertakes to train her. The rich man offers to advance all the money she needs, but she prefers to earn her own living. Unwilling as she is to accept favors from Gideon, she is bitterly angry when Alan Steyne, secretly jealous, warns her against him, and she insists that the millionaire's interest in her is strictly a matter of business.

Alan has inherited a small fortune and a house in Scotland, and he and Clarissa are to be married soon.

## XIX

A WEEK later Bruce Gideon came to Guarvenius's house in Bloomsbury Square, and found that Judy had just finished her lesson.

"I came to find you," he said, after greeting the dancing-master. "The Russian ballet opens to-night, and I have a box. I thought you would like to come."

"How gorgeous! How kind you are!" she replied impulsively.

"That's settled, then." He followed her out into the street. His big car was waiting there. "Where are you going?" he asked her.

"To Mr. Stornaway's."

Stornaway had suddenly asked for her services again. She liked sitting to him better than to any one else, except Max Dickbread, of whom she was really very fond, for all his rudeness and his exacting ways.

"Let me drive you," Gideon said.

For the first time she hesitated.

"You must be tired and hot; you will catch cold," added the soft voice.

"Thank you very much. You are very kind."

And Judy got into the car.

The subtle flattery was telling. It had begun with his deference to her opinion, gone on with his certainty of her talent for dancing, and culminated, perhaps, in the moment when she learned that the quiet young man who had played for her at his flat was the world's foremost pianist. Now it had become an established fact in her mind that all Gideon was interested in was her career.

She reached home about half past six, and found Chummy waiting for her in some excitement.

"Oh, Judy, how late you are! Do hurry up and dress. Alan has seats for Covent Garden—the first night of the Russian ballet—stalls! He's taking us out to dinner first—a real nice dinner at the Malaya!"

Judy shook her head.

"Sorry, darling; I'm booked."

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Chummy's face fell.

"Oh, Judy, it can't be anything so important as the Russian ballet!"

"It is the Russian ballet, pet. I'm going with Mr. Gideon."

"Oh, how unfortunate! Alan will be disappointed. Are you dining anywhere?"

"No. Mr. Gideon is calling for me here at eight o'clock."

"Then come to dinner at least, Judy. I suppose you couldn't put Mr. Gideon off?"

"Certainly not," said Judy. "You wouldn't have me be rude to a man who's been so awfully decent to me?"

"No, of course not," said the other girl a little anxiously. "But, Judy, do, do come to dinner!"

Judy could hardly refuse. She dressed quickly, and when Alan came to fetch them she was ready. She had managed to buy herself a new dress of a rich red gold, with a hint of bronze in it. It matched her hair and subdued the paint on her face—such a wonderfully eager little face!

All the way to the restaurant she was silent, huddled up in a corner of the cab. Steyne, with his eyes always on her face, talked gaily to Chummy, guessing that Judy was tired.

The dinner at the Malaya was rather a silent affair. Chummy had explained to Steyne that Judy had already accepted an invitation from Bruce Gideon. Alan made no comment.

It was very early, and the vast, white-walled restaurant, with its delicate color scheme of old rose and gold, was almost empty. It was the latest thing in eating-places, and none of their friends, except Alan, would dream of entering its portals unless he meant to go hungry for the rest of the week.

There was a slight restraint upon them. Judy and Alan had not met since the day when he had ventured his ill-timed warning. Chummy was frankly disappointed, and already looked upon the evening as a failure, because it had been planned to give Judy pleasure.

Neither of the girls wanted to eat. Steyne was hungry, having been for a tramp in the country after several days of unsuccessful effort at the art school. His appetite was almost the only topic of conversation. Judy joked about it, and Chummy gently encouraged him to eat. Over the coffee they grew more gay, and Judy forgot the time. She started up at a quarter to eight.

"My, I shall be late! I must get back!"

Steyne rose, too, and bent and whispered something to Chummy.

"Yes, that's a splendid idea!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't we think of it before? I'll stay here for a minute or two, Alan, and then I'll walk over to Covent Garden. It's only a few steps. It's not worth while my coming all the way back."

Steyne assented and paid the bill. Then he followed Judy out of the restaurant.

"I'll drive you back, if I may," he said.

"I'm going back to see if Clara Jenks is at home and would like to see the show. It's a pity to waste our third seat."

"Oh, she'll love it!" Judy cried. "I do hope she's there!"

In the cab they hardly spoke. Judy felt a little frozen by Alan's attitude. His voice was the essence of polite friendliness. She concluded that she had offended him beyond pardon the other day. Indeed, she had been very rude and flippant; but then he shouldn't have interfered with her.

He asked her how she was getting on, and she said very well. She asked him what he was painting, and he told her he had again come to the conclusion that he couldn't paint at all. He was thinking of giving it up and going in for farming.

Judy said she was looking forward to the fancy dress ball at the Lemon Grove on Shrove Tuesday—that was ten days from that very day. It was to be a real artists' and models' ball, like the famous Julian's ball in Paris. What was he going to wear?

He didn't know. What was she going to wear?

Oh, she wasn't sure, but a *Columbine* was the cheapest, she thought. She had quite decided that Chummy ought to go as *Diana*. That was what everybody who knew her likened her to. Chummy thought the costume too scanty, but Judy was trying to persuade her.

She saw Alan frown slightly, and she rejoiced bitterly, thinking she had shocked him. The more she could shock him the better for everybody.

Gideon's big car was at the door in Willborough Avenue. The outer door was still open, and he was standing just inside, smoking a cigar. There was no help for it. Judy had to introduce the two men, with a brief explanation. Then she turned to Alan.

"If you like, I'll run up and find out about Clara. I could tell her to get dressed

as quick as she can, and I could help her, too."

Before he could demur she was gone.

Gideon turned to Alan with a smile, and offered him a cigar, which the young man declined on the plea that he was going over to the theater as soon as Miss Jenks came down.

"You may as well dismiss your taxi, then," suggested Gideon. "We'll all go together."

Again Steyne declined with cool politeness. Miss Jenks might not be ready immediately, and he knew Miss Grant did not want to lose a moment of the ballet.

"You're engaged to Miss Morley, aren't you?" was Gideon's next question. He adopted a slightly patronizing air, with which mingled a smothered hostility that must have been instinctive. "You were away when I met Miss Morley again the other day. She didn't remember the previous occasion at all. She has made a remarkable recovery. You must think yourself very lucky, Mr. Steyne. What a lovely creature she is!"

"I did not know you had met Miss Morley before, Mr. Gideon," Alan replied with great formality.

"Oh, yes—at your little café. I was there with Stornaway one night, and he introduced me. Miss Morley was not very complimentary to me. She said I was ugly, and called me 'Punch.'"

He laughed, not entirely without malice. It pleased him to reveal Clarissa to her betrothed husband in such an unmannerly light. He disliked this young man, and resented his reappearance. The Morley girl was Judy's best friend and house companion, and who knew what bad influence they might not have on her? By "bad" influence Gideon meant, of course, an influence detrimental to his own plans.

Steyne looked at him with obvious frigidity.

"I trust you forgave Miss Morley for her rudeness, Mr. Gideon," he said. "Perhaps you did not know at the time that she was not responsible for what she said."

"Of course, I thought nothing of it," replied the rich man, chuckling. "I was vastly amused. It's only too true. I know I'm no Apollo. I admired Miss Morley immensely, and was fascinated by her romantic story. You must allow me to say how glad I am that it is to have a happy ending."

"Thank you very much," replied the young man, with an inward groan.

Just then Judy ran down to say that Clara was overcome with joy and would be down directly. The chauffeur opened the door of Gideon's car. Judy gave Alan a smile and disappeared into the luxurious interior. For a moment he saw her bright hair and vivid lips against dark cushions. Gideon followed her, with a slightly effusive farewell.

As Alan stood and watched the car slide away, a deadly hatred of Bruce Gideon and a conviction of the man's evil purpose were born in his heart.

In the vestibule of the opera-house, after the performance, Steyne saw Judy again. She looked half wild with excitement; her eyes had the amethyst sparkle in them that meant extreme elation. Alan had seen her look like that before, when she had sat in a box at a music-hall with him, and they had seemed to be the only people in the world.

He knew that she would not be responsible for what she did in that mood. The wonderful dancing had gone to her head. She was living, for the time, in another world. He registered a vow that she should not leave the opera-house alone with Bruce Gideon.

In the crowd he became separated a little from Chummy and Clara Jenks. He looked back and told Clarissa, by a series of signs, that he saw Judy and was going to fetch her, so that they might all go to the Café Turc together. Chummy nodded assent.

When he did find Judy, she was alone. She seemed to be waiting. Most of the crowd had passed on.

"Come along, will you, to the café?" he asked her. He did not know how harsh and dictatorial his voice was. The look of her filled him with despair. "Clara and Chummy are at the door."

"Oh, thank you," she said, "but I am waiting for Mr. Gideon."

"Where is he?"

"Talking to his sister, Mme. de Toros."

"Why are you not talking to her, too?"

"I don't know her."

Steyne's look burned into her brain. Her pride became a sort of fury.

"And I won't come to the café, thanks!"

"Yes, you will," said Alan. "Clarissa wants you to."

"Another time, then, thanks." Judy's



voice was contemptuous. "I am waiting for Mr. Gideon."

"Judy, you'll come with us, please!" He looked round and saw the rich man's bulky form coming toward them. Gideon was smiling. The gross lines of his face and the pin-points of his cruel little eyes made the young man feel sick. "You'll come with us, Judy," he said again in a hoarse whisper, and his mouth set itself into a line of inflexible determination.

Judy turned her head slightly and smiled at Gideon, who reached her side, his smile turning to a frown as he saw her companion.

"Miss Grant is coming with us," said Steyne, quietly belligerent. "We have arranged a little gathering for her."

Judy laughed nervously, and, almost against her will, walked beside the young man toward the door. Gideon followed, his bull neck and large ears very red, his face livid with rage.

"I am under the impression that Miss Grant is coming to have a little supper with me," he said.

"I think not," Alan replied.

They had reached Chummy and Clara Jenks, who looked at them in surprise. Chummy, a moment later, shrank back as she became aware of the passions let loose. That first, original quarrel of manhood hurt her—the quarrel of two men about a woman. Of course, she did not understand it. She simply saw that Alan was put out, and that Gideon had an ugly look on his face.

Judy, always apt to lose her head under excitement, was laughing uncontrollably.

"Oh, what a fuss!" she managed to say between two almost hysterical attacks.

"Come, Clarissa!" said Alan sternly.

His face indicated what he expected her to do. Still at sea, she linked her arm in her friend's.

"Come along, Judy dear! We're going to the café."

"No, really!" laughed Judy. "Oh, you do make such a fuss about things! I'm going out to supper with Mr. Gideon. He asked me long ago."

"Perhaps Miss Grant might be allowed to decide for herself," suggested Gideon with elephantine sarcasm.

"I'm going with Mr. Gideon," Judy said.

She was near to tears now—tears of furious indignation at being treated "like a kid," as she would have said.

"You are coming with us," Steyne said.

He also was beside himself, but white as a ghost and quiet as a deep stream. Judy stamped her foot.

"I'm not, then! I'm not!"

That finished it. The two men measured glances, and the younger knew himself beaten.

Judy and Gideon went out to his waiting car. Clarissa, crimson with shame, hurried out into the portico. Clara Jenks, secretly highly amused, waddled after her.

Clara was in wonderful spirits that night. She had just secured her first really promising engagement on the stage, to play in a duologue with a famous comedian at a London music-hall. Her part was that of a drunken but good-hearted landlady, and she was going to revel in it.

Personally quick as lightning in her powers of observation, Clara had taken in a good deal more of the meaning of the sharp little scene than Chummy. She sided with Judy, and thought Mr. Steyne had been quite ridiculously overbearing. As if Judy didn't know her way about! If she wanted a good supper and a ride in a comfortable motor-car, who was to blame her?

Chummy and Alan were just a little way ahead.

"Oh, Alan, was it necessary to be quite so cross with poor Judy?" the girl asked.

"You thought I was wrong, Clarissa?"

"It made me feel uncomfortable. After all, Judy can take care of herself, and Mr. Gideon had asked her first."

"He's not a fit man for her to be with," said Alan curtly. "I don't want to talk to you about it, but it is a fact. I wish you would do everything you can to prevent her going about with him."

His tone was so earnest that Clarissa was impressed. Her loving heart leaped in revolt at the hint of any unpleasantness coming near little Judy.

"I will, of course," she said; "but I don't think you need be afraid."

"That's because, like all girls, you think this man must be all right if he's rich!"

Alan spoke with almost vicious irritation. Chummy was so taken aback that she said nothing, but looked behind and stopped a moment for Clara Jenks to catch up with them.

All three boarded a bus and made their way to the Café Turc.

Dan's light, gay voice was not heard that night, singing the favorite Italian songs.

The general himself served his guests, with the assistance of a small boy he had borrowed from a neighboring establishment.

Dan had gone to Italy, he informed his customers, to bring back the body of his mother. Where he got the necessary amount of money was a mystery that he had refused to divulge.

Everybody missed Dan. As the general said, without him and Miss Jude-e-e he might as well put up his shutters.

Steyne could not disguise the fact that he was on wires. Bastien Dumont came and joined them. In the absence of Judy, the young man made himself agreeable to Clara—too agreeable, it is to be feared, for her snub face lit up, her lips smiled without the usual twist, and her round, gray-blue eyes rested on his handsome features without being able to disguise their admiration.

Poor Clara, it was a hopeless business! Alan had not a thought for her, except of camaraderie. It goes hard with a born woman comedian when she falls in love. Clara was made to keep people in fits of delicious laughter, and in some way or other every living creature, man and woman, managed to make her aware of this.

When they broke up that night, her heart felt very light. She walked home arm-in-arm with Bastien. At their door he pressed her hand. It had not occurred to her that Judy was not there. In fact, Judy had quite vanished from her mind.

Chummy had not forgotten her friend, however. She was tired, but she did not go to sleep until she heard Judy come up to her room. Judy was singing a little song under her breath. She must have had a good time, then.

It was well after midnight when Gideon's big car glided away from their door.

Neither Chummy nor Judy was aware that Alan Steyne had patrolled the street until he saw Judy drive up in safety, shake hands gaily with Gideon, enter the house, and run up the stairs.

## XX

It was more than a fortnight later, and spring had suddenly burst upon the earth in a great flood of color and scent.

Judy had lived in a kind of whirl since her first visit to the Russian ballet. There had been many hours of solid hard work—a "regular grind," she called it; but her whole heart was in it, and it came easily

to her. Then there had been a great deal of gaiety, part of it organized by her artist friends of the café, but more by Gideon.

She could not have counted how many times she had seen "Mr. Punch" during that fortnight. She had ceased to count them. She had drifted—that was how it was. Luxury was having its inevitable effect on her. Motor-cars and good food and plays and ballets and music—she was beginning to think that these things were life.

She had seen very little of Chummy, who was also hard at work. Steyne had gone up to Scotland again for a week or two. He had been present at the Shrove Tuesday artists' ball at the Lemon Grove, but at the last moment Chummy had decided not to go there.

It had been a riotous night. Judy had vetoed Gideon's presence with a peremptoriness that he had not combated. He didn't dance, and he would spoil her fun, she told him; so he had not seen the feather-light black *Columbine*, with silver leaves round her head, and all the world's laughter in her pansy eyes and on her crimson lips. It was well that he did not see her, for even the friend who had known her for years found her bewildering, and more, on that lantern-lit night.

Bastien Dumont, when it was over and he walked home, contemplated suicide under the cold, unfriendly stars.

Judy believed that M. Guarvenius was pleased with her. Not that he said much, but every now and then she saw a gleam come into his eyes, and he would call her "my bird" in Polish. She could not pronounce it, but he had told her what it meant. He never called her that unless she did something well.

She deliberately refused to think of Alan Steyne. That was one reason why she saw so much of Bruce Gideon. She encouraged the rich man's attentions because she felt that she must persuade Steyne that his part in life was to marry Chummy and make her happy.

She still had the sense of being flattered, and could not help having it. She was deferred to, consulted, placed on a pedestal of taste and knowledge, in a way that might easily have made her supremely ridiculous, had it been managed less subtly. For she had no knowledge and very doubtful taste, particularly in matters of art.

She continued to see Gideon surrounded

by people who deferred to him. She saw him with his cross-grained mouth set in a tight line, and all the world offering gifts to propitiate him. There were two or three men he now and then allowed to have meals with him when Judy was present, and they always seemed to be trying to cajole him into a good temper.

And yet, to her, no one could have been, figuratively speaking, more consistently on his knees.

Never once had he treated her in any way differently from the women of his own world. She was quite sure of that. He had never attempted to make love to her. He dwelt constantly on the all-absorbing theme of her career.

One afternoon, when Judy arrived at Vincent Stornaway's, she was shown into the studio, and the servant informed her that his master had a visitor with him. He did not say who it was.

Stornaway had one possession that Judy coveted more than anything in the world. It was the skin of a very large polar bear, which lay on the studio floor, in front of the open fireplace where, summer and winter, wood burned on the beautiful old pierced steel fire-dogs.

Judy simply loved it. It meant all beauty and all luxury to her. She had made up her mind that if she ever became a great dancer, the first thing she would buy would be a counterpart of it. She loved to kneel down on it and to bury her little hands in its snowy fur. She loved its silky softness and the resilience with which it started away from her touch.

She sank down on it now in the uttermost content, laying her bright head for a second on the squat, stuffed head of the animal. She looked like a child as she lay there.

The studio was rather dark on this particular afternoon, some of the curtains having been drawn over the big skylights. Outside the sun shone brilliantly. Just at the back of a couch by the hearth was a tall, many-folded screen of old Spanish leather, which entirely shut off that part of the enormous room.

Judy heard voices presently—first a murmur from the adjoining room; then they came nearer, and she recognized Bruce Gideon's soft tones mingling with Stornaway's. So he was the artist's guest! That probably meant that he had lunched here. He

would go now, and Stornaway would settle down to several hours' work. She sighed, for she was very tired, and she had rather hoped for a short sitting.

It must be admitted that she was beginning to feel the irksome necessity of earning her scanty livelihood as an adjunct to the hard work of her dancing-lessons and practise. Sometimes she was so tired that she almost lost consciousness of what was going on around her; and when she awoke in the morning she would not even remember how she got home the evening before.

Stornaway and his guest came into the room, but they stopped behind the screen. Judy gathered that the artist was showing Gideon a piece of his work. All the canvases were at the other end of the studio.

She was just going to call out to them when her own name fell on her ears.

"Here is the sketch of Judy, Gideon—the one you asked me to do. I could elaborate it, if you like it."

The ever-ready laughter rippled on Judy's lips. She was going to hear what Mr. Punch thought of her picture.

She herself thought it perfectly hideous; but Stornaway told her it was the best thing he had ever done. It was a dancing attitude he had chosen—that is, she was standing with one arm poised on her hip, leaning a little forward on her toes. She was supposed to be thinking of the dance that she was about to begin. Stornaway had told her he was doing it for his own pleasure. He had said nothing about Gideon asking him to do it.

Again, what could she feel but flattered?

"It's splendid!" Gideon's voice said. "It's a great thing, old chap. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I rather like it," admitted the artist modestly. "You see, every muscle is taut, ready to spring into action."

"Wonderful!" said Gideon. "Wonderful! What a figure she has!"

Judy snickered behind the screen.

"You're very much gone on her, aren't you, Gideon?" the artist asked.

Gideon laughed, somewhat roughly for him.

"She's not the kind to give a man much peace," Stornaway went on.

His tone was not offensive at all, and yet Judy stiffened.

"You're right there," Mr. Punch said, with an inflection that made Judy stiffen still more.

"Is it—serious?" was the artist's next question.

"Damnably," said Gideon.

To Judy it suddenly became intolerable that they were discussing her like this—discussing Gideon's feelings for her in this cold-blooded way. If Gideon was fond of her, what was there to prevent him from being so? They spoke as if it were an impossible thing—something to jest and laugh about. Odious creatures, both of them!

"A thousand pities"—Stornaway's voice sounded exceptionally clear—"a thousand pities, Gideon, that she isn't the sort of girl one could marry."

Gideon's laugh was a little broken this time. What he answered seemed to write itself with a sharp, fiery pencil on the listening girl's brain.

"That's putting it rather strongly, my dear fellow. Marriage—well, it never did appeal to me, you know; but you're right, of course. If one did marry, it wouldn't be a little Judy Grant!"

Judy sprang to her feet. At the same moment the artist said carelessly:

"By the way, I was expecting her this afternoon. She hasn't come yet. Come back to my den and smoke another cigar."

The voices grew more distant. The two men had left the studio.

Judy knew the arrangement of the house. Next to the studio was an anteroom, the door of which was always open, and beyond that was the artist's sanctum—a large, untidy apartment, with all sorts of odd bits of furniture, masses of photographs, and souvenirs of boyhood and early travel. It had nothing of the ordered beauty of the rest of the house.

Stornaway had married, within the last year or two, a woman of wealth and position, no longer young. She never came into his studio, and appeared to take no part in his artistic life. One sometimes saw her name mentioned in the papers as attending this or that function, but Judy had never set eyes on her.

The girl stood there, drawing deep breaths, so violent that they shook her slender frame.

"Not the sort of girl one could marry! If one did marry, it wouldn't be a little Judy Grant!"

Wouldn't it?

So that was what he thought of her—this horrible, ugly, loathsome man! She wasn't the kind of girl he would marry.

Oh, dear, no! He would only be slimily, disgustingly amiable and deferential and friendly, and try to cheat her and throw dust in her eyes, and trick her into believing he had the greatest respect in the world for her—that was all!

Men were all alike. Didn't she know the world? But she had very nearly allowed herself to be fooled!

There was no time to stay there and rage inwardly against Bruce Gideon. They might come back at any moment. She was not going to be found there.

She slipped across the studio and out into the corridor that led to the central hall. When she came upon a servant, it was not the one who had admitted her.

"Will you please tell Mr. Stornaway," she said, "that I came to tell him I couldn't sit to him to-day? I'm his model. They said there was some one with him, so I waited a minute, but as there's no sign of him I've come away. Just say that Miss Grant called to say that she was much too tired to sit to-day. He'll understand. Thanks so much!"

And before the servant could answer she was running down the stairs and had reached the front door.

The maid went to find Stornaway and delivered the message. She found him with Bruce Gideon in his den. Both men assumed that Judy had just come to the front door and left the message. They made no comment, and shortly afterward Gideon took his leave.

Judy, meanwhile, walked as fast as her legs could carry her. She was deaf and blind with fury. She did not see where she was going, and it was a miracle that she was not run over.

"Not the sort of girl one could marry! It wouldn't be little Judy Grant!"

The words rang in her ears like clashing bells. They roused the devil in her. She could gladly have killed both Gideon and Stornaway if she had been strong enough.

So that was what Mr. Punch thought of her! All this time he had been scheming to make her believe that he was decent—trying to deceive her. Then, when she was thoroughly blinded, when the time came, then, no doubt—

She ground her little teeth as she rushed headlong through the park.

She found herself in Oxford Street presently, and remembered that she wanted a new pair of stockings for her dancing prac-



tise. She was always wearing holes in her stockings, and they hurt her when they were too much darned. She was such a bad darning, and Chummy, who would have loved to do it for her, was worse.

She went into a shop and bought a pair at random. She was fiercely glad, inside her violent little being, that she owed nothing to Bruce Gideon—not a thing beyond the introduction to Guarvenius, except a few meals and motor trips. She need never eat at the same table with him or go to a theater with him again. When she wanted to see dancing, she could save up, as she used to do, and go and stand up in the gallery, or let one of the boys treat her, if he could afford it.

Never again! Never again should that odious man be allowed to do a kindness to one of her friends, even, as he had done to Dan.

### XXI

JUDY ran up the stairs and flung herself into Chummy's room. She did not expect to find Chummy there, but they shared the little writing-table, and she wanted to write a note to Bruce Gideon. She had just remembered that she had promised to lunch with him on the following day.

Never again!

Chummy had done wonders to her room, and it was quite presentable now. The screen around the bed and toilet-table had been recovered. There were some cheap rugs on the floor. Her aunt, Miss Morley, had given her an old chest, a little writing bureau, and a tall, old-fashioned mirror. Out of her small allowance she had bought two wicker chairs, cushions for them, and a jar or two of pottery for flowers. She had the artist's capacity for imparting beauty to the simplest things; and the sun came into the room in the afternoon.

It was about five o'clock when Judy got back. She must have been later than she thought at Stornaway's. Her dancing practise had been very trying that morning. She had had practically no lunch, and she felt ready to drop. Her five senses seemed to have failed her, so that she was almost up to the writing-table near the window before she realized that the room was not empty.

Alan Steyne was standing in the window, with his back to her, reading a newspaper. He turned, hearing her, and she gave a little cry.

"I thought you were in Scotland!"

"I came back this morning, sooner than I expected. I was just going to leave a note for Clarissa, asking her to dine. I've been with the lawyers most of the time. I'm letting my place."

"Letting it!"

"Yes—some people are very keen on it for the fishing, and the shooting later on. They're paying a big rent. I've let it for six months. It seems silly to leave it empty."

"But when you're married!"

"Clarissa wants to go abroad," he said. "So do I." He was gazing at her earnestly. "Judy, you look tired to death!"

"I am a bit fagged," she said, and dropped into a chair.

The mention of his marriage had started that mad fury in her brain again. Chummy was a girl good enough to marry—Chummy was not a girl of no account, like little Judy Grant! She burst into a tempest of tears, wailing and rocking herself to and fro.

"Judy!" cried Steyne. "What's the matter? Don't do that! Oh, please don't!"

But she went on sobbing.

"Judy, I can't bear it! Is it only that you're overtired, or is there something else?"

She burst into a string of inarticulate sentences, her voice muffled in her hands. Alan came nearer, but could only make out the words, repeated over and over again:

"Horrible world! Horrible world!"

His heart stood still for a moment. Then he dropped on his knees beside her and took her in his strong arms.

"Judy, little Judy, tell me all about it!"

His voice was as tender as a woman's.

"Nothing to tell," she blubbered. "I hate everybody!"

"Oh, no, Judy—you don't hate me! Sweetest, dearest girl, let me tell you what it is! You're killing yourself with all this work, and with trying to pretend you're gay, and having a good time, and all that. Judy, do stop crying, or you'll break my heart! I know what it is—you love me and I love you. I love you, God knows, more than I can ever say. We're trying to live an impossible life, and that's why you say it's a horrible world. It isn't a horrible world; it ought to be a perfectly beautiful world. Oh, Judy, do give up this foolish, idiotic, utterly impossible life!"

The crisis passed. Judy's sobs grew less and less violent. Pushing Alan away from her, she got up and went to the tall, walnut-framed mirror that hung between the two windows. Taking out her powder-puff, she began to wipe away the tear-marks that had made havoc of her face.

She laughed hysterically.

"I'm all stripes! What a sight! I'm a fool—that's what I am!"

"No, Judy—you are the real Judy when you cry and show that you are unhappy," said Alan passionately. His eyes dwelt hungrily on her droll, garish little face. "You are only a sham when you pretend you are having a good time."

"I don't pretend!" she exclaimed. "I work hard, let me tell you. That's why I broke down just now. I'm dog-tired."

"Judy, don't you at least owe me the truth?"

"It is the truth."

"No, it isn't. The truth is that I love you and you love me."

"I don't!"

"Yes, you do. You ought to let me tell Clarissa that I only care for her as a friend, and that you and I love each other and want to get married. You know as well as I do that she'd much rather know; and then it would be a beautiful world."

Judy had been fighting for self-possession while he was speaking. Now she stood, carefully using the powder-puff, her face somewhat repaired, her features composed. Only in the pansy eyes still lingered the mistiness of those heart-broken tears.

"Now, listen, sonny," she said, in a voice that was intended to be very matter-of-fact. "We'll never talk about this again. I'm not leading an idiotic and impossible life. I'm working very hard. I'm trying to be a dancer, and I'm told I have a good chance. I was silly to cry, but I'm tired, and I've been walking fast, and it's beastly hot. But this is what I want to say—once and for all. If you were to tell Chummy everything, and she were to beg me on her knees to marry you—that's what she'd do, bless her heart—I wouldn't—I wouldn't—I wouldn't! You can't make me see that black's white. I know that Chummy loves you, and I've made up my mind that Chummy's going to be happy, and—goodness me, haven't we said all this before a hundred times?"

But Alan's eager, ardent eyes were look-

ing into hers. He came and held her hands, and his voice thrilled her through and through. He seemed to feel that if he fought it out to-day he would win.

"Judy, darling Judy, you're all wrong! Clarissa can never be happy with me. How could she? I don't love her—not like that. She's the dearest, best girl in the world, and I can't say how I admire her. I'd do anything to make up to her for those lost years; but it's not right, it's not fair, to marry her. It's cheating her—can't you see that?"

"Rubbish!" cried Judy. "Are you such a rotten actor as all that?"

That seemed to madden him. He caught her in his arms, crushed her close, and kissed her with wild and desperate passion.

"You want to drive me mad!" he murmured. "I won't let you! I've got you, and I'll keep you in spite of yourself!"

Judy fought her way out of his arms. Her limbs failed her, and she clung to a chair, trembling. She was white to the lips, but her eyes were full of a starry shine. Heaven knew it was no good pretending that she didn't love him—after that!

Suddenly she listened, open-mouthed, and then turned to Steyne a face tragically alert.

"It's Chummy!" she whispered. "I hear her on the stairs. For Heaven's sake, don't look like that!"

In another moment the door opened and Clarissa came in. She looked full of energy and life. There was amazing vitality in her face, in spite of its pale coloring. She flushed with gladness at the sight of Alan.

He explained rather hurriedly about having let his house in Scotland, and asked her to dine with him at Ginori's. She accepted happily, and turned to Judy.

"Judy must come, too, Alan—on your first night back!"

"Sorry, angel," said Judy very decidedly. "I've a rotten headache. Mr. Steyne was just lecturing me for working too hard. Cheek, I call it!"

Alan, whose nerves were all on edge, only wanted to get away. He was sure that Clarissa had noticed nothing. Judy was superb, and he supposed he had played up to her.

As a matter of fact, Clarissa had sensed something unusual. When Steyne had gone she looked anxiously at her friend.

"Judy, did Alan offend you? I do hope

not. You look—I don't know—unhappy. I'm afraid you may think that he's interfering. I happen to know that he thinks it unwise for you to go about so much with Mr. Gideon, and perhaps he was talking about that. You see, dear, men do know the world better than—"

"Oh, Chummy, I'm sick to death of hearing that!" Judy interrupted rather wildly. "I don't care if they do. I can mind my own business, and I say let them mind theirs. I hate Mr. Gideon and the whole lot of them!"

With that she flung herself out of the room.

Chummy was decidedly wistful and preoccupied that evening. Steyne was in an agony lest she should suspect what had really passed between himself and Judy. He would have told her, if Judy had allowed him. That would have been fair and honorable, and he was sure it would have been for her happiness, as well as theirs; but the thought that she might find out was hateful. It galled him beyond bearing. It would make him seem low and mean, like being discovered in an intrigue, and by this splendid girl with her noble nature and her faithful heart.

But he need not have feared, for Chummy had not made the discovery he dreaded. She merely saw that Judy was unhappy about something or other. She jumped at a conclusion, not altogether erroneous, which she imparted to Alan.

"I believe Judy has quarreled with Mr. Gideon. This evening she said she hated him."

This, at least, was good news.

As the meal proceeded they both tried to cheer up. Afterward, at the Café Turc, Bastien Dumont joined them and made things easier.

There happened to come in that night a man who had been in the South Seas for some years. He had left England just before Steyne, and they had been great friends. He had given up painting, and had become one of the foremost novelists of the day.

As was usual in that unconventional crowd, there was a great deal of moving about from table to table, and Chummy and Bastien found themselves alone at theirs for a few moments. Steyne had been drawn into a heated argument at the big table opposite, where the eager faces of the

disputants were all but blotted out by the clouds of smoke.

Chummy suddenly asked the young artist a question.

"Bastien, I wonder why I should remember you best of them all during all these years! You have always seemed a real person to me."

Dumont did not think the subject a safe one, so he brushed the question aside; but in doing so he made an unfortunate admission.

"My dear girl, you can't account for these things. When you come to think of it, why didn't you know Alan when he first came back?"

The moment he had spoken, Dumont realized his mistake. Clarissa stared at him with large, uncomprehending eyes.

"Didn't know Alan, Bastien! Of course I knew him!"

He tried to cover his tracks.

"Yes, of course. I didn't mean—"

But he was not dealing with an average intelligence. The girl saw clearly that he was trying to get out of what he had said.

"You said when he *first* came back, Bastien." She spoke kindly and gently, and as if it were a very ordinary matter. "Please tell me what you mean."

"Nothing, my dear girl—nothing."

Dumont was not versed in diplomacy.

"Bastien," Clarissa went on, "you must have meant something. You were talking about my condition. You said I didn't know Alan when he first came back."

"Oh, ask Alan himself," pleaded poor Dumont.

Chummy shook her fair head.

"No, Bastien—he would hate it. It would be painful to him. We try to forget all that—he and I. And I must know. Think, Bastien, how it would affect you if you thought you had behaved in some strange way that you don't remember! Please tell me the truth."

He was caught, and could not wriggle out. He told her about that first meeting, when she had not recognized Alan when he was brought up to her room. He sketched the whole episode in very light colors; but her swift questions brought out the reluctant admission that she had several times dined and gone to the play with Alan before the day on which she had first understood that he had come back.

She took it very naturally, smiling, and looking across to the table where Alan sat

in a cloud of smoke. His delightful voice rang out, a little raised in argument. He was evidently getting the better of his adversary, who was growing excited and almost incoherent.

"How very curious!" she said to Bastien. "Of course you can see Alan wouldn't like to speak of it—or Judy, either. Thanks for telling me, Bastien. I shall never mention it; but I had to know. The brain can play pranks, can't it? Fancy my being with Alan and not knowing him!"

Chummy's manner entirely deceived the young artist. He thought she took it as a matter of course, whereas in reality she was trembling with a great fear and a great horror.

She had been with her beloved in the flesh, and she had not known him! She had talked with him, grasped his hand, eaten at the same table, looked into his eyes—and not known him! She had regarded him as a new friend—a very pleasant one, Bastien had suggested; but her heart had not beaten out the glad news to her that it was Alan—that he had come back!

It gave her a new outlook and a new insight. She realized that she had been out of her senses. All else might have seemed dim and nebulous, but that she should not have known Alan! Loss of memory, they had called it—loss of memory; but it must be something more, something much more, worse, dangerous! Who knew that it might not happen again?

Very soon afterward Alan came over, laughing good-temperedly over his wordy victory. They went out. Chummy answered Bastien's nervous hand-grip with a cordial clasp; and her smile quite reassured him that he had done no harm.

## XXII

JUDY and Clara Jenks came out of Guarvenius's house in Bloomsbury Square together. It was a very hot afternoon. Summer had suddenly descended on the land. The asphalt streets were soft, the reek of petrol was nauseous, and every city sound was intensified a hundredfold; and yet it was only the beginning of spring.

Judy had been taking a lesson, and at the end of it she had been asked by her master to dance before another class. It had been a bounding, leaping, wildly exciting bacchante dance to some intricate modern French music.

Clara Jenks was there because Guarvenius had been kind enough, through Judy, to make her free of his big rooms for practice. Her part in the music-hall duologue required some acrobatic and gymnastic dancing, and she had evolved some screamingly funny steps out of her comic soul.

"Clara, you'll bring the house down!" said Judy, as they passed out into the glare of the sun.

"And you, Judy, you'll simply set the town on fire!" replied Clara.

She was almost a transformed being, these days. Prosperity spoils small-natured folk, but it makes big-natured ones bigger still. Clara was blossoming. Her blunt face, humorous eyes, and mouse-brown hair would never be beautiful, but she was not nearly so plain as she had been a few weeks ago. The fun of the world radiated from her; and Bastien, of late, had been so sympathetic, and had entered so fully into her amazing luck.

As they turned into one of the big squares, the traffic debouching into Oxford Street held up a large limousine in which sat a man and a woman. The man was handsome, well past his youth, with lines in his bronzed face that told of hard living. He had a grizzled mustache and dark hair. He was leaning toward the woman, gazing at her with absorbed interest, talking animatedly, obviously finding in her the one thing that mattered to him in life.

His companion was quite young. She had yellow-brown hair that grew round her pale face in rather fantastic curls. Her eyes were vivid turquoise blue. Judy's chief impression of her was that she was bored, and that she looked cool on this sultry day, swathed in transparent black, with a large lace hat, and that she wore a long string of pearls of fabulous size.

"That's Gertie Clarendon that was," said Clara excitedly. "Do you remember her at the Victorian? She was only in the chorus."

"Poof! How cool she looked!" sighed Judy. "Yes, I remember her name."

"She is Lady Everglade now," Clara went on. "That's her husband with her."

"He looks a swell."

"No end of a swell! Don't you remember the wedding? He's an earl. They said he divorced his first wife to marry her."

"Lord! He must have been keen! And she only a chorus-girl!"

"Yes, a girl like you and me—no bet-



ter," said Clara stoutly. "Not an ounce of cleverness in her. I mean, you and I could both give her fits. And there she is, a countess, if you please, sailing about in a car as big as a bus and wearing pearls as big as marbles!"

"He must have been keen," repeated Judy absently.

"He was—dead keen. You see, that's the way with girls when they're clever, Judy."

"But you said she wasn't clever."

"Not clever at her job, I meant; but clever as the devil when it came to hooking old Everglade, you bet! She wasn't the kind of girl a chap like that *marries!*"

Clara's voice was full of profound scorn. Judy had heard almost the same words before. "Not the sort of girl one could marry!"

"But he did marry her!" she said with a sudden snap, like a fish biting.

"Oh, yes, he married her all right."

"Why, then?"

"You goose! Because he was mad about her and couldn't get her any other way."

"Oh!" said Judy.

It was a whispered exclamation, just a soft expelling of her breath. Thoughts were taking shape in her mind. Fury and hatred and revenge had been seething there for days, but never any coherent plan. There was none now—only the picture of that cool, white-faced, blue-eyed, yellow-haired girl in the big car, and the handsome man hanging over her, his eyes alight, his pleasure hers, his will and his life just a couple of toys in her hand.

That was an idea! Lord Everglade had been mad about Gertie Clarendon, and he had to marry her. Perhaps in the beginning he had thought that she was "not the sort of girl one could marry." Perhaps she had been to him only a "little Judy Grant"; but Gertie Clarendon had been clever. Judy laughed as if something had amused her.

Before she reached home Judy bought an evening paper. One of the first things she saw was this announcement:

Jasmin sings and Gossteivitsch plays at Mr. Bruce Gideon's big party in Mount Street to-night.

Judy read the half-column devoted to Gideon's entertainment very carefully. There was a description of the salon, which

she learned for the first time was the most beautiful room in London, and of the music-room, where she had danced to Guarvenius. And Gregor Gossteivitsch, who had played for her, was to play to the guests, and Carlo Jasmin, the greatest living tenor, was to sing, and the flowers were to cost so many hundreds, and the supper was to be served at separate tables in the picture-gallery on the floor above.

Judy had not seen the picture-gallery, but she could visualize the lower rooms, with all the roses and carnations scenting the air, and the women's dresses and jewels, and the blaze of light from the wonderful silver chandeliers.

She read that Mme. de Toros, Mr. Gideon's sister, was acting hostess; that she was famous for her elegance and perfect taste in dress, and that she would probably wear the magnificent Albenza pearls.

Judy's thoughts went back to the girl in the car. She would probably be there—Gertie Clarendon, now the Countess of Everglade. At any rate, she *could* be there; but little Judy Grant couldn't—oh, dear, no!

She did not know a single person in Gideon's real world—only the two or three uninteresting men who had been to lunch with them, and who obviously belonged to his business life. For the first time she learned from the paper that he was interested in Transatlantic Oil, from which he derived part of his enormous fortune. She really knew very little about the man.

She had not seen Gideon since the day when she had overheard the two men talking in Stornaway's studio. She had written to say that she could not lunch with him on the following day. He had answered, also in writing, asking her for the day after. She had declined that, too, saying she was busy.

All the rest of the day she brooded. Frequently there rose before her mental vision the pale, curl-framed face of the Countess of Everglade, who had been Gertie Clarendon, a chorus-girl, no better than herself.

That night Judy was at the Lemon Grove, and her kindness lifted poor Dumont into the seventh heaven.

Two afternoons later she went to Stornaway's. She was in radiant spirits. She had had a wonderful lesson that morning. Guarvenius had actually praised her and called her "my bird" in Polish about a

dozen times. He had also said that she would be ready in less than a year. He wanted her to go to Paris, and told her that she was not to worry about expenses. Was she not like a daughter to him, and would he not be repaid a thousandfold when she took the world by storm?

Judy really began to think that she must be going to be a great dancer. Somehow she did not mind what she took from Guarvenius. He was making plans, he told her, for her to live with a relative of his in Paris, a Polish lady married to a Frenchman. They would look after her. He wasn't going to have Judy running about the Quartier Latin as she did about Soho. She might get into mischief and spoil all his beautiful plans.

Stornaway welcomed her eagerly.

"I've been wondering what had become of you," he told her. "I stupidly tore up your letter and forgot your address."

"Fact is, I've been awfully busy," said Judy. "I didn't think you were so very keen on the sittings, Mr. Stornaway; but I ought to have let you know when the week was up."

"I shall be very glad to have you back," he said in his urbane way, which always suggested that he lived in a world with which there was no fault to find. "I haven't dared to touch that sketch of you. We must get to work!"

She laughed.

"Oh, but that is not work, Mr. Stornaway! You said you were only doing it for a joke."

"I didn't say 'for a joke,' Miss Judy. I said 'for my pleasure,'" he corrected, smiling.

And she smiled back, having heard from his own lips that he was doing it for Bruce Gideon.

"But I do want you for some more serious work," he went on. "I've got to paint that Princess Elizabeth in again. I'm not satisfied with her. I'm booked to deliver that canvas in August for the jubilee of the town hall, or some such function."

They got to work at once—Judy in all the panoply of Tudor royalty. She always felt most uncomfortable in the heavy skirts, the sweeping sleeves, and the close red wig.

When the sitting was over, Stornaway offered her tea; but she refused it and bade him good-by.

"I say, Miss Judy!" He detained her with a light and kindly touch on her shoul-

der. "Don't think me meddlesome, but I've been rather worried about you. I know about your dancing and all the hard work it means, and model work can't pay you anything to speak of. Aren't you rather overdoing it? I should hate to think of your being overworked, when a little help—"

She knew he was not speaking for himself, as it were. Some infallible instinct told her that. She threw back her head and laughed at him, with mischief in her pansy eyes.

"Mr. Stornaway, you pay me about three times as much as anybody else," she said; "and your work is much easier. I'm much obliged to you, but I don't want any help."

The artist's eyes rested for a moment on her shabby clothes.

"Have you seen Gideon lately?" he asked irrelevantly.

"No—not for several days. Were you at that grand party of his?"

"Yes," Stornaway replied. "It was a great show. Would you like to have been there?"

"Rather not!" she snapped. "What would I be doing there?"

"Gideon thinks a lot of you, Miss Judy."

"Does he? I've got to learn why. He's been very decent to me about the dancing."

"He believes in you. A man like that can be a very good friend."

"No doubt, Mr. Stornaway. I'm very grateful to Mr. Gideon for what he has done."

She was not giving herself away. She was quite convinced that the artist was pumping her, trying to get at her real thoughts about the rich man. No doubt Gideon had told him to do so. Mr. Punch wanted to know whether she was piqued or alarmed by his sudden neglect. Well, he was not going to know. Her nebulous plan was revealing itself as a definite game.

Stornaway made an appointment for the following afternoon. She felt sure that Gideon had put him up to it, and she was pretty certain that the millionaire would turn up himself.

She was right. He strolled in, as if by chance, toward the end of the sitting. Stornaway stopped painting at once, and Judy, released by a nod from her stiff pose, yawned and stretched her slender arms high above her head.

Gideon greeted Judy with his usual deference, playfully remarking that Guarvenius must be a slave-driver, and that she ought to escape from him now and then.

"I am escaping from him, Mr. Punch," Judy replied. "I'm going to Paris soon."

This was news to him. He seemed pleased, and hoped he might be there at the same time to show her the sights. He often ran over to Paris, he said.

Stornaway said he would paint no more that day, and they had tea. Judy poured it, sitting on the couch with her feet on the white polar bear, and remembering how she had sat on it and overheard the two men discussing her. She was sparkling with high spirits, as gay as a lark, and making the men rock with her cheap witticisms and quaint expressions.

Gideon left the house with her. She allowed him to walk with her to the main road and wait for her omnibus.

"When shall I see you again, Miss Judy?" he asked. "What about to-morrow? I'm busy all day, but will you dine with me?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Punch," she said.

There was something pensive and almost shy in her smile, but she was full of inward laughter. She saw the look in his eyes—the old covetous look. His lips were moist as he smiled. He supposed that she had felt neglected because he had not sought her out, and that she would now be easier to manage. He thought he had scored the first point in the game.

But Judy knew that she had.

### XXIII

It was the last week in July. London was sweltering in a peculiarly trying moist heat. The sky seemed to be almost over one's head, and to consist of several layers of blankets steeped in boiling water. The air was a grayish yellow, and felt exactly like the hot room of a Turkish bath.

Bruce Gideon was in town, and was entertaining his sister at luncheon. She had just shut up her house in Lowndes Square, and was leaving on the following day, with her husband and two sons, for Aix-les-Bains. The boys were fourteen and twelve years old. Their uncle was devoted to them, and it was understood that they would be his heirs if he died unmarried.

Mme. de Toros looked quite cool. She was one of those people who, though full of energy, never hurry.

They had finished luncheon, and Mme. de Toros was drinking her coffee and smoking a thin Russian cigaret. She had been questioning her brother about his plans, and had learned that he was going to Vichy for his annual cure, but not until the middle of August. Though he showed his Spanish descent less than his sister, Gideon had certain foreign traits in his nature. One of these was the fact that he preferred to keep himself in health by drinking waters and dieting, rather than by indulging in any strenuous form of sport. For all that, he was an excellent shot and a first-rate swordsman, in spite of his bulk.

"You will be late for your cure, my dear Bruce," his sister said; "but you're not looking as if you need it much."

"I'm perfectly fit," he answered carelessly; "but one must go somewhere. The last half of September I shall spend in Venice, as usual. It's too hot for most of you people, but for me it's the ideal time of year."

Mme. de Toros carefully extinguished her cigaret. She took a sip from her liqueur-glass, looking rather hard at her brother with her bold, humorous, utterly sophisticated eyes.

"Bruce," she said suddenly, "who is this little girl you are always about with?"

Gideon did not hesitate in his reply.

"A little model from Soho, my dear Thirza. Does it interest you?"

"I am wondering why you take her to the places you do," she went on. "I have seen you myself several times."

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked, with a low laugh.

"It has not been your habit—that is all. These are places where you meet your friends. And Manuel, who was in Paris recently, saw you about with her there—at all the very smart places."

Manuel was Mme. de Toros's husband.

"Well?" asked Gideon, his small eyes meeting his sister's with an expression of amusement.

"I was only asking," she said, shrugging her shoulders.

She and her brother had always been good comrades. She had no fear of offending him.

"Miss Grant," he said, "is a rather remarkable little person."

"I take it she must be, to interest you," his sister answered. "But remarkable in what way?"

"She is going to be a dancer. Guavenuis has taken her up, and he thinks much of her. He sent her over to Paris to study for a while under Julia Chassier."

Mme. de Toros's smile was a challenge.

"He did not send you over to look after her, I take it?" she said.

"He did not."

"Bruce, you are not thinking of marrying her?"

Gideon laughed.

"My dear Thirza, what an idea!"

"Then why all this trouble about her?"

"What do you mean?"

"*Mon cher*, I am a woman, after all. The girl has no clothes, no jewels. She looks worked to death."

"She is."

Mme. de Toros lit another cigaret.

"It mystifies me—*voilà tout*."

"We will leave it at that, my dear Thirza. Miss Grant is very interesting and very—difficult."

"Ah! Not easy to manage, you mean?"

It was Gideon's turn to shrug his shoulders now.

"For the moment, she is wrapped up in her career."

His sister smiled.

"It has always puzzled me," she said, "why you have never turned your attention to the girls who would be attracted by you, or to the women of your own set, who value brains, knowledge of the world, and good taste, and to whom life is a fine art. Why do you waste yourself on these little vulgarians? Think of Ailsa Davenne—what she cost you, and how nearly she ruined your life!"

Gideon was suddenly roused. His pale face hardened into a mask; his forehead looked ghastly under its band of thick black hair.

"I will pray you, my dear Thirza," he said, "not to mention that name in the same breath as Miss Grant's. And as for the women you speak of, they bore me to distraction. All they want is money, and freedom to pursue their own particular forms of self-indulgence. As you know perfectly well, I am attractive to no woman—for myself alone."

His laugh rang through the room, silky but uncertain, suggestive of an immense edifice of pride built up on a shaky foundation.

"You are ridiculous, Bruce," his sister said rather sharply. "Nowadays even wo-

men do not need to be good-looking in order to be attractive. Why should men?"

He did not reply. A moment later he was summoned to the telephone.

When he came back to the little dining-room, his sister was drawing on her gloves.

"Are you entertaining in Venice in September?" she asked him casually.

"I don't think so," he answered after a second's hesitation; "but if you and Manuel and the boys want to come, I shall be delighted."

She eyed him with a knowing smile as she went out of the room.

"I'll give you plenty of notice before we come," she said significantly.

He accompanied her to the front door and saw her into the lift. Then he stood looking down after her with a frown on his heavy brows and an ominous droop at the corners of his ill-natured mouth.

It happened that a domestic hitch prevented the Toros family from starting for Aix-les-Bains on the following day. They were obliged to spend another couple of nights in their London house, though it was practically shut up.

On the morning after her luncheon with her brother, Mme. de Toros was rung up by Vincent Stornaway, who told her that he had been asked to send her portrait to an international exhibition in Madrid, and he wanted her consent.

"I will come and have another look at it," she told him. The portrait was still in his studio, awaiting final touches. "I've forgotten what it looks like. If it's not too ugly, you can send it to Madrid, if you like."

She made an appointment with him, but was unable to keep it; so she went out to Kensington, on chance, about two hours later. She found Stornaway out, and his studio tenanted by a little person in rather startling clothes, whom she at once recognized as the girl she had seen with her brother.

She was glad of the opportunity of judging Judy Grant for herself. She smiled with her pleasant self-assurance as she advanced into the great room.

Judy was a little gaudier even than usual. She wore a dress made of a Roman silk scarf, with wide stripes of turquoise, rose, black, yellow, and green, hardly any sleeves, and a low-cut neck. At close quarters, Mme. de Toros was struck by the girl's wonderful pansy eyes and the glorious light



in her red-gold hair. She was still more impressed by the flower-like quality of the little face and its expressive innocence, in such startling contrast to the garishness of Judy's general appearance. It was the face of a child, thought the woman of the world—so truthful, so candid, so utterly lacking in guile.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Grant," she said. Her voice was low and soft, like her brother's, and it had all the aplomb of her pleasant worldliness. "I am glad Mr. Stornaway is out. I must introduce myself. I am Thirza de Toros, Bruce Gideon's sister. I have just been lunching with my brother, and we spoke of you."

Judy was taken aback. It amazed her that Mme. de Toros should speak to her. That she should use this friendly tone was inexplicable. The girl was instantly up in arms, scenting something mysterious and malign. She put all her prickles out.

"I'm sure it's very kind of you," she said; "but I don't think you'd find me very interesting."

"My brother takes a great interest in you," the other woman said.

"Mr. Gideon has been very kind to me about my dancing," she said. "I suppose he told you about that."

"Yes—he thinks you are going to be wonderful. You must be, if Guarvenius has taken you up. When do you think you will make your debut?"

"At first Mr. Guarvenius said it would take ever so long—eighteen months or more," Judy answered; "but lately he has changed his mind. He's hurrying me up, and wants me to come out in October."

"And I suppose you're working awfully hard?"

"You bet I am!"

"Then I expect you need a good time when you're not working," Mme. de Toros went on, with just a hint of amusement in her voice. "My brother sees that you get it, doesn't he? He's quite right. Relaxation and change are everything in this life."

"Oh, I don't know so much about that!" Judy answered.

She was perfectly natural and at her ease by now, and a little huffy because this lady assumed that she appreciated Gideon's company.

"You and my brother have a great deal in common, I expect, Miss Grant," Gideon's sister went on.

"Not an awful lot," the girl said with a light laugh. "He's always bothering me to go out to dinner and shows. I think he overdoes it, myself. I feel I need a rest now and then."

Mme. de Toros was amused, but she was also intrigued. The girl spoke as if Bruce Gideon were her impresario, only concerned with the question of her ultimate artistic success. She spoke as if she herself were an automaton for which he could have no human feelings. There was something behind all this—of that the woman of the world was sure.

"Most people find my brother an excellent host," she said.

"Oh, he can be amusing enough when he chooses," Judy replied. Then she added, with an almost childish look of mischief in her eyes: "It must sound cheeky to you, my talking like this! I keep forgetting you're his sister. Of course, I don't know anybody belonging to him at all. This is quite a business matter. He says I must get out and see people and things, and old Guarvenius backs him up."

Mme. de Toros smiled in the most friendly way.

"You saw a lot of him in Paris, didn't you, Miss Grant?"

"Not so much," Judy said truthfully.

"He took me to a few of the very swagger places, where nobody else could afford to take me. That's where money comes in, you see! But I was working most of the time, and the lady I stayed with was very particular where I went. I think old Guarvenius is afraid I'm going to sprain an ankle, or break a leg, or something. He'll hardly let me move out of his sight now; but he trusts me with Mr. Punch."

"Mr. Punch?" queried the other woman.

"That's what I call Mr. Gideon."

"Oh, I see!" she laughed good-humoredly. "My poor brother knows he's not handsome."

"What does that matter?" asked Judy generously. "He's rather a sport about his looks, I think; and of course most people only think of his money."

Thirza de Toros was frankly mystified. What was the girl's game? It was plain that she was fleeing from him and letting him pursue her. That treatment was the right one with any man, no doubt, and with Bruce even more than with most. He was accustomed to being pursued—for his money, of course.

"Is Mr. Stornaway painting you, Miss Grant?"

"I am sitting to him as a model. That's my trade, you know. I have to live while I'm working at my dancing. It was through Mr. Stornaway that I met Mr. Gideon."

Mme. de Toros could make nothing out of it.

"Are you expecting Mr. Stornaway?" she asked.

"He should be here directly. My appointment was for about a quarter of an hour ago."

Stornaway came in just then, and Judy slipped into the model's dressing-room. Mme. de Toros inspected her portrait and told the artist that he could send it to Madrid to be exhibited, if he liked.

"I suppose it's what you call strong," she said with a grimace. "It's certainly ugly!"

She did not see Judy again. She went away more disturbed than before. Either the girl was very deep, or she was a specimen of her sex that could only be described as unique.

#### XXIV

"HAVE you seen Judy lately, Alan?" Chummy asked one morning, as they walked away from the art school together.

"Not since she came back from Paris," the young man answered. "I am told she is always about with that brute."

"I am so worried!" sighed Chummy. "It was bad enough when she wouldn't come back to live with me; but now she never comes near me, and when I go and look for her she's nearly always out. Alan, I know she must be starving herself!"

Steyne laughed bitterly.

"One doesn't generally starve at the Ritz and the Carlton and Claridge's, Clarissa," he said.

"Oh, but I don't believe all that! Besides, it isn't a few casual meals—it's one's every-day life that matters."

"How can she afford these new rooms?" asked Alan.

"I don't know. Mr. Guarvenius, perhaps—"

"Guarvenius? Nonsense! You know perfectly well this odious cad has got hold of her."

"Oh, Alan, you don't mean you think Judy is taking money from Mr. Gideon! No, no—I'm sure she's not. You don't

know Judy. She's the straightest little soul in the world."

"What I want to know is, how is she living?" he asked.

Chummy was astounded at Alan's violence. She looked at him a little shyly, and her eyes grew wide and startled as she saw the expression in his face. It was something she did not understand. It was more than anger. It suggested how a primitive man might have looked when, robbed of his woman, he set out to slay.

Chummy did not understand. She saw that Alan was deeply moved—which did not seem at all unnatural. She knew that he cherished a strong feeling of hostility against Bruce Gideon. As she told herself vaguely, men knew the world better than women.

For all that, she secretly thought Alan's feelings exaggerated. Of course, Judy was her best friend, and Clarissa would do anything for her; but she had a firm faith in Judy's power of taking care of herself. That also was only natural, seeing that for years Judy had taken care of both herself and Chummy.

Since Clarissa had discovered that for some weeks she had been in Alan's company from time to time and had not known him, a certain shyness had overtaken her when she was alone with him. It seemed so strange; it unnerved her. It put up a slight barrier between them. She did not dare to mention it to him, for it would make him feel uncomfortable. What must he have thought on the day when she did recognize him and ran straight into his arms? How wonderful that he still cared for her!

One day, of course, she must speak of it; but not yet—one day when they were married. That would be soon now. They had fixed on August—next month. They were going abroad at once—to the Dolomites, and afterward to Venice and then to Rome.

No actual date was fixed for the wedding, however. They sometimes spoke of it in general terms, and to Chummy it was like some wonderful dream. She had achieved all that she could ever ask of life. She was painting successfully, and had several orders for portraits. She was going to be Alan's wife, and she had made a little place for herself in the world, so that she would be a help and not a hindrance to him.

So she waited in perfect contentment for Alan to ask the all-important question:

"Which day shall it be?"

The 17th of August was her birthday. She thought she would suggest that day.

Perhaps it was natural that she did not take his rage against Bruce Gideon very seriously. She herself was anxious about Judy, but, after all, it could not be helped. Judy must live her own life in her own way.

Judy was going to have a wonderful life, too; and one day she would meet a man and love him, and would be happy as well as famous. Of course, Chummy was quite certain that Judy was going to be famous. It was a thousand pities she did not care for Bastien. Bastien was such a dear, and he was so devoted to Judy! He was working hard, too, and prospering wonderfully. He was going to make a great name for himself. Who knew? Perhaps one day his fidelity would have its reward.

Alan had an appointment that afternoon with an old school friend, but he and Chummy were to dine together.

At Chummy's door they parted.

"When I've taken my bag up," the girl said, "I'll go and try to find Judy and get her to come out to dinner with us. It's ages since we had a meal together. If she's out, I'll leave a note."

The young man said nothing. It was no happy prospect to him—only an added torture; but, at least, if Judy was with them, she could not be with Gideon.

Chummy took her bag up-stairs. Then she went down again, had a hasty lunch in a tea-shop, and hurried round to Judy's rooms, which were in a quiet little side street across Willborough Avenue, close to Ginori's. She found Judy out and left a note for her.

As she walked home it began to rain, lightly at first, but soon increasing to a soaking downpour. It was an immense relief after the heat of the last few days.

Chummy settled herself in her room with a book; but she had hardly begun to read when the door burst open and Judy came in, clad in her gay Roman dress, and wet almost to the skin.

"I couldn't go a step farther," she announced. "I've been standing on the pavement drinking it in, and then I discovered I was getting wet. A towel, Chummy, darling, to save my valuable life!"

"Haven't you been home, Judy?" the

other girl asked a moment later, as she wiped the moisture from Judy's flopping hat.

"No, I've come straight from Max Dickbread's. That wicked old man is working me to death, Chummy! He wants to get away, and he wants to finish the picture first."

The elder girl's eyes rested searchingly on her friend. Judy had wiped her cheeks and lips with her handkerchief, revealing a very white face and enormous, overbright eyes.

"Judy, you're looking simply dreadful," she said. "You do worry me so!"

Judy came up to her and scanned her face with a kind of fever.

"Chummy, aren't you happy?" she asked.

"Of course I am; only I'm worried about you."

"Why worried, pet?"

"Because—oh, well, because you would go and live somewhere else, and I never see you."

"Don't be absurd, sweet! I had to do it. I'm nervy and jumpy, and awfully cross. I'm not fit to live with—high pressure, old Guarvenius calls it. You see, the time is getting short, and I'm getting more scared every day, and my hours are all anyhow. I'm better alone—truly I am!"

It was gallantly done. How could she explain that she could not go on living with Chummy because it meant seeing Alan Steyne? How could she say that she couldn't bear his eyes, the sound of his voice, the touch of his hand? How could she admit that she knew he would ask her questions to which she had no answer?

"When are you to be married, Chummy, dear?" she asked a moment later.

"Next month some time, Judy."

"But what day?"

"It isn't fixed yet."

"Not fixed, and this is the end of July! You are a casual pair!"

"Oh, there's plenty of time!"

"Plenty of time—I don't think! What about your togs?"

"I sha'n't worry about clothes. You see, we're going to travel."

"Still, Chummy dear, you must be married in something."

She stopped abruptly, seeing the flush slowly mounting in her friend's cheeks.

"Judy, I was at your rooms just now," Chummy said. "I left a note asking you

to dine with Alan and me to-night. I wish you could," she added wistfully. "We never see you now."

"Really, angel, I'm dead beat," began Judy, and then she stopped uncertainly.

"I'm afraid Alan thinks he has offended you in some way," the other girl went on. "It's rather pointed, Judy. Has he? I hate to think you and he don't get on."

"Rubbish!" cried Judy. "Of course I'll dine with you. I was only going to mope at home. The idea of my not getting on with your young man! I think he's a peach! What time? I'll go home, now that it's stopped raining, and get a little rest."

"We'll call for you," said Chummy, smiling happily.

When Judy reached Clive Street, where her new rooms were, she found Gideon's car drawn up outside the little old-fashioned house. The chauffeur saluted her. She affected not to see him, and, rage in her heart and a dark frown on her face, she opened the door with her key.

She met Gideon descending the stairs.

"I came to see you about to-night," he began, his smile edged with a perceptible line of exasperation.

"Well, I wish you wouldn't," the girl replied tartly. "I don't like you coming here. That monster car of yours! This is a respectable house. What will they think of me? Not that I'm an honest girl, working hard for her living, you bet!"

"It's your fault, Judy," the man said peevishly. "You won't see me. You won't talk to me on the telephone. You avoid me like the plague, and don't answer my letters. You must have got my note this morning. I want you to come to Flomena's party at Richmond. Guarvenius particularly wishes it. It is only polite, after the kindness she's shown you. We'll dine at Claridge's first, and then drive out."

"I'm not going anywhere with you to-night, Mr. Punch," Judy said. "I have a previous engagement; and I'll thank you not to come here any more."

As if to emphasize her words, she practically pushed him out of the house and slammed the door.

*(To be continued in the April number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

### CALIFORNIA WOODLANDS

LET me lead you down a lane  
Winding like a fond refrain  
Through a valley set with song of bird and brook;  
In its leaf-entangled turns  
There are hints of Moore and Burns.  
Once I found a lai Provençal—come and look!

In this fair beginning-place,  
Where the alders interlace,  
Herrick's fancy would find much to charm the ear;  
In that glade across the stream,  
Where the wild azaleas gleam,  
Puck or Ariel might any hour appear.

Up that little wooded slope  
Hedged with honeyed heliotrope  
Keats and Shelley surely would have joyed to climb,  
Tuning love-lyres to the breeze  
Lilting through the laurel-trees,  
Snaring music's very soul in nets of rime!

Here the lane ends; tiny trails  
Lead afar to lesser vales,  
Dells and dingles echoing the pipes of Pan;  
See, a long procession strays  
Down the bard-enchanted ways—  
Close your dreamful eyes and join the caravan!

Clarence Urmy



# The Mountain

ILLUSTRATING THE TRUTH OF THE POET'S SAYING THAT "THE SHALLOWS MURMUR, BUT THE DEEPS ARE DUMB"

By Benjamin Faulkner

THE man leaned in the open cabin door, stooping slightly, and gazed up at the snow-covered summit of Mount Shasta. He knew its lines well, and the grace of its lower curves, but he never tired of them.

A little way from the cabin the upper Sacramento began to widen for its slow, beneficent journey through the valley. It made half of an S as it bent between high rocks bordering the small fruit farm. The cabin itself was really a large and comfortable house. It sprawled in harmony with the river, fitting itself into the hollows and rises of the land—becoming an integral part of the land, as indeed the man seemed a part of it.

His eyes left the mountain's crest and followed a clear-cut, winding trail, visible even in the failing light of dusk. Two dim figures were descending the trail, clinging together as they walked—a man and a woman, unmistakably, and the watcher knew just who they would be.

Now he saw the woman point toward the cabin. With her other hand, which had been thrown across the man's back, she removed his arm from her waist.

The man in the cabin door sighed, but did not move.

"She's thinking of me," he said, almost sadly.

Joel Brooks was a man of nature, a calm man, seldom swayed by passion. He had something of immobility of the mountain he so often gazed upon, and who knows but that he also had some of the eternal fire that burns at its heart? There was very little ego in him, but he often felt that he was a part—a necessary part—of the manifold and multifarious congeries that is called nature.

The bit of pantomime that he had ob-

served hurt him deeply, but there was no trace of emotion on his face. Another man, especially one possessing Joel's skill with a rifle, would have had the bead of his gun upon the couple. Another might have clenched his fists and uttered futile threats. Joel watched and did not move.

He was hurt because the woman was his wife and the man one whom he knew as friend—as, indeed, Joel knew all men.

"I have no enemies," he might have said without cant.

He was hurt in a somewhat different way because Lucy was trying, with small success, to conceal her love for Hugh Rogers. He could remember the frank, free-spoken girl he had married only a few years ago. How she would have scorned concealment! He hoped now that she would come to him and tell him, in her old free way, that she loved Hugh—even though hearing from her lips the words her eyes already spoke would be the greatest hurt of all. He would bear that willingly, if only her splendid frankness were not lost.

Still young—surely not more than thirty-five—his lean, ascetic face and his ill-assorted yet somehow attractive features wore the mask of years. Suffering and grief and the weight of great experience were reflected there. Though their lines remained, ineffaceable, over them had come a new coordinating composure. Whatever darkness had blinded the man, whatever flames had scarred him, to-day, as he stood in the shadow of an eternal mountain, he was at peace.

Life, the endless cycle, repeats itself. What one man learns at the risk of his soul's immortality, he cannot pass on to another, save genius be in him. What Joel had learned he could not give to Lucy. In her supple young body the old fires burned

undimmed, and there was upon her a great hunger and a great thirst—for the very dregs that Joel had tasted.

At first the mountains were to her, as to him, a refuge and a haven; but then she had been ill. Her illness and his tender care of her had united them as man and wife in a love built of kindly softness. For them there had been no cruel, surging madness, no storm bursting the flood-gates, no great force crashing to its inevitable fulfillment. Not for Lucy, at any rate.

To Joel, Lucy had remained as he had found her—a girl child to be guarded and cherished, to be protected from the things that had struck him before he had won to serenity and calm. Now she was growing up, trying her new-found wings. When he spoke, as he sometimes did, of the beauty of their life together in the mountains, he saw the longing in her eyes and heard her soft sigh.

A visit to San Francisco did not help, but made her more eager to get away again. And then, out of the world he had known, where Joel's name was still loved and his books were genuine events, came Hugh Rogers.

Rogers was flippant, light-hearted, with the gift of eternal youth, but one of the kindest and most lovable men you could find anywhere. If Joel's disease was thought, as Hugh said, Hugh's weakness was superficiality. Brilliant, picturesque, he had never paid anything for what he possessed. They were his birthrights, unquestioningly accepted as his due, dispensed with a largesse that made his acceptance of them tolerable.

His travel sketches were dashed off on his typewriter, or dictated at top speed, and never revised. They sold easily, and were collected into volumes that made every one want to go to the Solomons, or Madagascar—wherever it was that Joel's fancy had taken him.

There was no envy in Joel's heart when he thought of Hugh. He sincerely admired him, although he laughingly chided him for his carelessness as to details.

"For example," Joel would say, "in your description of the making of *kava* in Tahiti I observed that—"

"To tell you the truth, Joe, I was too busy drinking it to find out how it was made. I just jotted down what a Frenchman told me. I don't go in for details—I only aim to hit the high spots."

It was no wonder Lucy loved him, Brooks thought, as he watched them come down the trail. Lucy's mind only "hit the high spots," too. She was no longer the frail, delicate child that Joel Brooks had married.

If only he could show her, tell her, make her know somehow, how much he loved her! But, said his quixotically scrupulous mind, that would not be fair now that she loved Hugh and Hugh loved her. Joel should have done that long ago. Ah, but hadn't he tried?

That was the thing he often thought of—the isolation of each human being upon an island of his own experience and his own character. Sometimes love, like a vast geologic upheaval, bridged two islands and made them one; but such phenomena were rare.

And Joel was more isolated than most men, finding it more difficult to convey, even to the woman he loved, his real feelings. Once, when he had tried to reason Lucy into a love of the peace of their solitude, she had turned on him flamingly.

"You have no emotion!" she had said. "Nothing ever bothers you. You are never upset, and I am always upset. There's a turbulence here"—striking her breast—"that I cannot still!"

Joel went into the house when Lucy and Hugh, hand in hand, crossed the footbridge. He did not want Lucy to have another cause for concealing the love that glowed in her eyes and trembled on her lips.

## II

DINNER that night, served by a silent Korean whose eyes were almost as keen as his master's, was a thing of laughter—like the sound of a stream about to crash headlong over a precipice. Joel felt hopelessly in the way. Whenever Lucy looked at Hugh, or when he looked at her, they abruptly stopped speaking, awed by the thing they felt.

It was Joel whose calm, modulated voice carried the conversation. No one, observing him, could have guessed that he saw into the very souls of the others.

Over the table hung a cloud of fear. Lucy was afraid of what she had discovered. Hugh was afraid of what he had become, yet unable to be otherwise. Joel was afraid for them and their safety.

Inevitably he let something of that creep into his words, yet he spoke without ap-

parent feeling. He was talking about divorce in various countries, civilized and barbarous, comparing the multiplicity of codes that have grown up, each absolute in its own locality. It was a problem that interested him deeply, for where he found diversity he endeavored also to find the coordinating principle of relationship.

"Many lands, many customs," he concluded; "and yet all of them get right back to the same old ground. Divorce exists because human love dies, along with all else that is human. And what is the death of love? Almost invariably a new desire, a new love, that takes the place of the old."

He ignored the frightened glance that Lucy and Hugh exchanged.

"Behold the philosopher!" Lucy's eyes said, quite clearly. "He sees all, knows all, save that upon his own door-step!"

Inevitably, too, there was a trace of scorn in her glance. Now that her love was dead, she was scorning the very thing in Joel that once had won it.

He saw all that the look implied, and went calmly on.

"So I say we should have only one code—a frank acceptance of the fact that love dies. It is nothing to be ashamed of, but a normal phase of human emotion."

Lucy's scorn could not be repressed.

"Oh, Joel, what do you know of emotion? You haven't a shred of it—not so much!"

She snapped her fingers to measure the amount.

"Perhaps not," Joel agreed calmly; "but even so I can think about it."

"You can't think about emotion—if it's the real thing," put in Hugh. "It gets you. It drugs your brain, and barren reason is cast out." He stopped abruptly as Joel's eyes met his. "At least," he mumbled, almost apologetically, "that's the way I am."

"So are we all," said Joel; "but whatever the depth or strength of it, my only demand is for frankness. It's repression and concealment that make the clean fire of emotion a poison to all it touches."

His inscrutable eyes were fixed upon his pipe. Lucy's went to Hugh, and Hugh's fell. Lucy's lips were parted. She seemed about to speak; then her white hand fluttered to the bodice of her black dress. She laughed.

"Oh, dear, we're becoming serious about

life! Joel, get the brandy you've been saving. I'd like the teeniest drop, and Hugh has the reputation—"

"Quite undeserved, really," said Hugh, laughing. "It's because I only drink in public."

Joel lighted his pipe and left the room to get the brandy. As the door closed behind him, Lucy turned quickly to Hugh.

"I must tell him to-night! I can't bear deceiving him, even in thought. And you heard what he said."

Hugh reached for her hand and held it, his handsome, youthful face alight.

"I agree with you now," he said. "Before I thought it was impossible—I couldn't conceive of a man so utterly without emotion. But he has no feeling—not even for you! I'm sorry for him, awfully—I wouldn't hurt him for the world. Almost, before that, I'd give you up!" His eyes flamed in the emotion of sacrifice. "But it won't hurt him, I can see that now. I don't believe he has a feeling in the world. His old mountain, the trees, the river—they are to him all that you are to me. Tell him to-night, and to-morrow morning we can leave. The day after, San Francisco; and then, beloved, Hawaii, China, Japan, India—wherever you like! Oh, my beloved!"

He sought to embrace her, but started quickly back as Joel's footsteps became audible outside.

### III

LATE that night, long after dinner, Joel stood outside the cabin and looked up with love at the immutable mountain that had come to be, to him, a symbol of unswerving verity. Hugh had proclaimed a desire to write, and had gone to his room, where a shaded light still burned. Lucy had remained indoors, reading.

She found Joel, if anything, more calm, more emotionless, than at dinner. He stood with an easy languor that gave no sign as she approached him. She came, in her rustling silk, like a timid bird. Joel did not turn until he felt her soft, childish hand on his arm. Then he leaned toward her, smiling, as he had been wont to smile when she was ill and rebellious about getting well.

She found it very hard to speak. She could not utter a word while he was smiling at her. Suddenly it came to her that his solid strength and wisdom were worth

much more than Hugh's brilliance and fervor. Then she looked away to avoid her husband's glance, and her quick, childish anger arose.

She turned back to Joel, avoiding his eyes.

"Joel, I have something that I must tell you. I—I love Hugh Rogers, and Hugh loves me."

Although he knew the fact, Joel had thought he would be stunned by the words that proclaimed it; but he was not. He continued to smile at her, and now there was a whimsical twist at the corners of his mouth altogether out of keeping with the situation. His smile was one of gentle amusement. He could only think how charmingly childish Lucy was. He recalled a vivid incident of her illness, when she had refused to take medicine, and had demanded a pound of chocolates—just as she was now demanding Hugh Rogers.

"Yes," he said, as the amusement left him. "I know it."

"You know it? Why—"

"Dearest, your eyes have said little else since Hugh came. And he, of course, is as easily read as a head-line."

"I'm going away with him to-morrow, Joel. It's the only thing to do. I can't stand it here any longer. You have no emotion. You sit and watch us, you know we love each other, and you make no move. You don't love me—you never have loved me—or you couldn't act that way!"

"Lucy, dear, I don't love you any the less because I don't rant. I love you so much that I would even give you up to make you happy. If you are sure of your love for Hugh, there's nothing for me to do. Are you sure?"

Lucy proudly lifted her head, and her eyes shone with conviction.

"Positive!" she said. "We're going away to-morrow!"

There was no kindness in her tone. She found that she could not be kind, as she had meant to be, to this image of stone, who smiled at her when she told him she loved another. Nor could she see, behind that twisted smile, the soul of the tortured man, clinging with clenched hands to the reason he worshiped, in order that he might not raise his hands to kill. When she left him and went back into the house, she did not see his arms reach out to her, nor did she hear the pitiful, futile prayer he lifted to the mountain.

He stood there in the night until the chill, damp air awakened him, and he saw the gray of the beginning day creeping up the eastward slopes of the mountain. Then he turned and went into the house, where the Korean boy was already busy preparing breakfast.

To whatever gods Joel had prayed, they had not answered. He sank wearily into a deep chair in his study. Something seemed strangely amiss in the room, and he looked about to examine its familiar corners.

His eyes rested upon a spot beside his chair, and he saw the swastika of a Navajo rug. It did not seem to belong there. He had never noticed it before. Something else had been there.

It came to him in a flash. Lucy had often sat upon a green silk cushion, there beside his chair, while he read to her; and now the cushion was gone.

He got up and walked about the room, trying to find it; but it had been taken away. He slumped back in his chair and a dull ache throbbed in his head. Soon all the things he had come to associate with Lucy would be gone. The house would be stripped, uninhabitable.

He breakfasted alone, with the silent Korean bringing him food he could not eat. Then he went out of doors again, leaving the house to Lucy and Hugh. He did not return until he saw them come out, dressed for the trail. He heard Lucy tell the servant to send her bags out by the next pack-train.

Lucy led the way, with a subdued Hugh following. Joel met them at the foot-bridge and smiled gravely. He held out his hands, one to Lucy, the other to Hugh.

"Good-by," he said. "I hope you will be very happy!"

Lucy smiled provocatively at him, but it was plain that she was puzzled.

"Good-by, Joel!" she said.

Perhaps, if Joel had broken down then, she would have thrown herself into his arms and remained there forever; but he did not break down. Instead, he gripped her hand like a comrade.

Hugh turned away, ashamed, as Lucy went off down the trail.

"Joe, old man, I'm damned sorry!" he protested. "I feel like a rotter, but—"

"Take care of her, Hugh," Joel interrupted. "Be good to her."

Then he stood until he caught the last



glimpse of Lucy's brown felt hat as she turned the corner of the trail that led down the mountain and out into the world.

## IV

LUCY and Hugh went down the trail in silence. Nothing Joel could have done or said, nothing he could have left undone, could have hurt Lucy more deeply than his final tender, calm farewell. Hugh was manifestly embarrassed. He could not comprehend Joel, and he felt that somehow he was violating a sacred code.

He looked shyly at the woman by his side, and he was afraid that he would never win her love as she had won Joel's. Thinking it over, looking back upon Joel as he stood in the shadow of the mountain, Hugh knew that Joel loved Lucy with a depth and strength of which he was not capable. There had been many women in his life; in Joel's, only one. Lucy knew this, too.

As the mountain bent over them, while they took the downward trail, she felt its presence as for years she had felt Joel's—calm, immutable, protective. She looked at the slender, boyish Hugh. She compared him with Joel, as she had not been able to do in her husband's presence. The two men were so different.

Suddenly Lucy felt childish, and felt that the man at her side was a child. Joel was a man.

Provocative, questioning, came her thoughts. She wondered, woman-like, if Joel could really let her go without a word, if he could so easily put out of his life what had been for years the very soul of that life. It was unthinkable, inconceivable!

She began to laugh almost hysterically as she slipped on the trail and Hugh caught her to support her. Then, her curiosity aroused, she made an excuse—she had forgotten her mother's last picture, she said, and she must go back for it.

She turned and ran back up the trail, to the house. There was no picture there, but she must see Joel again. She must see him when he did not know she was there.

As it turned out, she saw him as she had never seen him before.

## V

JOEL went back into his study at last, closed the door carefully behind him, and sat with bowed head at the table. He felt curiously listless and indifferent. Nothing seemed to be worth while.

He took an unfinished manuscript out of the drawer and tore it into bits. He tossed into a far corner a book he had been asked to review. Then he sat motionless until the Korean boy knocked on the door and announced luncheon.

"Eat it yourself," he directed. "I'll let you know when I want something."

He solemnly weighed the things he had won and lost from life. Nothing that remained had any value for him. And as he came to this conclusion, his hand made its way into the drawer of his desk and closed over a pistol.

He drew out the weapon and carefully examined it. It was a thirty-eight, loaded. Unemotionally he lifted it to his temple, at the same time raising his head and eyes until they were level with the broad window before his desk.

Curtainless, and of plate glass, the window was a perfect frame for the snow-capped mountain. The summit of Shasta with its crown of white was like a wise and benevolent old patriarch looking down on an unwise son.

With the pistol still against his temple, a thought ran through Joel's brain. It was wordless and fleeting, but it might have been translated thus:

"Some day Lucy will need you. You cannot do anything but live for her. Though she has gone away, she is yours to love and cherish and protect, always. You must wait!"

He laid the pistol on the desk.

"I'll wait until she needs me," he promised the mountain, in a whisper.

Then his head fell upon the table, and great sobs shook his body. The pent-up emotion of months surged over him like a sea, and his blood throbbed in his brain, unseating his controlled poise.

A knock came at the door, but he did not answer. Another, but he did not hear. Then the knob slowly turned, and he was dimly aware of another person in the room; but he did not care. His body shook with the storm, and tears flowed from his cold, smiling eyes.

At last he raised his head again to the mountain and looked upon it. He drew himself erect and said again:

"I'll wait—until she needs me!"

"I need you now—Joel," whispered a soft voice at his elbow.

He started and looked down at a golden head that somehow resembled Lucy's, at a

figure as slender as hers, but wraith-like through his tears.

"Joel, dearest, dearest Joel, I couldn't go away from you! You are the only man in the world for me. Your mountain—our mountain, now—turned me back. At every bend of the trail it seemed to say, 'You belong here, you cannot go away!' And I couldn't, Joel. I never want to go anywhere again as long as I live. I need you, now and always, dear, and I need our mountain!"

Sincere and frank as she was, Lucy was not philosopher enough to know that it was his need of her, rather than her need of

him, that made her love him. Curiosity had turned her back, and the sight of her man, broken like a boy, had won her love. Now they were equals.

Before he had quite realized that it was really Lucy, she had taken her old place in his arms, curled into that refuge like a frightened child. His tears flowed into the golden rain of her hair. He could not speak.

Then she raised her lips to his, and in her kiss he found the depth of her awakened womanhood. In her eyes he saw the profound calm of a woman whose soul is that of a mother of men.

# Eighteen Holes and Out

A COMEDY OF FOOZLED STROKES

By James W. Egan

**W**HEN the superior fraction of the sketch first suggests this golf stuff, I let out a wicked squawk. I feel no craving to gallop over the greenward after the little gutta-percha, or whatever it is they make them marbles out of, and I knock the idea like a hammer-hurler tagging tenpennies.

But I don't win many tongue tussles with the housekeeping half of the family. All my arguments are wiped away like dust from the dining-room table. The wife has made up *our* mind. She figures that we're due to bust out in Cascade City society, and that you're a social dud if you can't amble around eighteen dry holes and a possible wet one—depending on your luck in finding a real friend.

"Now that we've joined the country club," she says, "there's nothing to prevent us getting out and learning golf. Everybody who is anybody plays these days. Believe me, I'm not going to be a back number, Caleb Brindle!"

"Golf!" I growl. "Clover croquet! Fine sport for a big husky guy like me—chasing a pill with a club for six or seven miles! Then think of the time it would take me away from the yard, and—"

"Will you ever put your mind on something besides slabs and slate?" cuts in the wife. "You've been fussing and fuming around that yard of yours ever since the day I was fool enough to let the minister put one over on me!"

"Well," I remind her, "if it wasn't for that coal and wood business we couldn't belong to the country club, and live in the high-toned part of town, and support a fresh maid with three afternoons off every week, to say nothing of a heavyweight cook who is almost as big as the wages she wants!"

"That part of it is all right, Caleb; but you know the yard is in such shape now that it requires very little of your attention. We've both been toiling and slaving for ten years, and we're entitled to enjoy ourselves a little, as well as to take our proper place in society."

She salves away, and I have to bounce in the old sponge.

"I suppose after golf it 'll be pachisi, huh?" I grumble.

"You are absurd, Caleb! You'll find golf a most absorbing game, and more difficult than you think, if what Mrs. Griner has told me is true. Thank goodness, we

have some one in the family who can help us a bit!"

"Who?" I demand, although I figure I know the answer.

"Cousin Lonnie, of course. He's a splendid golfer. He told me so the other day."

"Oh, did he?" I chirp. "If that egg knows as much about golf as he does about anything useful, he'll be as big a help to us as a megaphone to a deaf mute!"

"Cousin Lonnie" happens to be Alonzo Bonbright, a relative of the wife's, who is paying us a visit—and paying nothing else, so far as I'm able to note. He was supposed to drop in for a day or two, but Alonzo seems to own an Eskimo calendar, for with him a day is six months long. To me this cooky is a poor brand of apple sauce; still, the wife likes him, so I'm forced to grin and bear it.

Mrs. Brindle loses no time in cracking the golf ambition to Alonzo, and right away he is to tell us all about it.

"I have played considerable golf," he warbles. "If you'll listen to me, you'll soon learn how it goes, and you'll save the cost of going to some high-priced professional who probably don't know his mustache from a hole in the ground when it comes to real instruction. Now I know something about golf!"

"I suppose," I gargle, "that these professionals are just tramps that horned in somehow, and are grabbing the berries under false pretenses, ain't they?"

"I didn't say that, old dear," blushes Alonzo; "but I'm willing to bet that no professional can tell you more about golf than I can."

"I believe that," I remark. "You're the best teller I ever lamped outside of a bank."

Alonzo grows haughty.

"Of course, if you think—"

"Caleb, please be still!" snaps the superior half. "You are very rude, especially when Lonnie is so willing to oblige us in the matter. When can you come out with us, cousin?"

Any time, Alonzo tells her. He couldn't very well yodel otherwise. Much as Lonnie ate and slept, he couldn't put in twenty-four hours daily doing it.

So we three swooped down on the Cascade City Country Club, on the following afternoon, equipped with brand-new clubs and golf clothes. The wife had insisted on

dressng the part, and the trousers and socks I had on made me feel cheaper than a nickel in a taxicab.

Alonzo was as full of advice as an onion is of fragrance, and he herded us to the first tee, or mat, or whatever the blamed thing is, like a policeman taking a couple of burglars to the hoosegow.

I ain't going to irritate anybody by telling them what a terrible afternoon we spend. You probably know how the game goes. You grab a handful of wet sand, stick a nice white agate on top of it, and then try to sock said agate. Try to is good; I missed the goofy thing five times in a row before I finally crashed out one for all of ten or more feet.

"Keep your head down and your eye on the ball! Your stance is all wrong! Didn't I tell you how to hold that club? Get that grip right! Follow through on your swing!" bawls Alonzo, and me with no more idea of what he was yapping about than a worm has ears.

The wife and I sure enjoy ourselves. When we ain't topping drives, or foozling approaches, or swatting the ball a mile when we want it to go two or three feet, we are busy hunting for lost balls. Golf-players seem to lose balls as fast as they do tempers—and that ain't so slow, I'll tell the universe. I am sorry I didn't pay a couple of detectives to dash around with us, instead of the kids with the sarcastic smiles who carried clubs and were supposed to help hunt for the pills.

Nearly every afternoon for a week I suffer this cruel and unusual punishment, and I begin to get so I can take a cut at the little cherry and have a faint idea of what will follow. The wife is better than I am. She wanted to learn the game in the first place, anyhow.

As for Alonzo—well, the insults I have to take from that baby are sure the strychnin. Lots of times I wish I had him down in the yard, where I could heave four-foot logs at him, and nobody around to sign an armistice.

For an egg that squawks as if he wrote the game, the wife's cousin don't seem any Jim Barnes to me. He makes plenty of bum shots himself; and when it comes to counting his strokes, he don't know any more about arithmetic than a ticket-seller at a circus, judging from the answers he gets. Nevertheless, he has Mrs. Brindle convinced he's the fairy prince of the fair-

ways, and all he says goes like doughnuts at a kids' picnic.

## II

ABOUT two weeks after our family has started the daily stunt of tearing up the country club grounds like a steam-shovel, the wife gets a letter from this Mrs. Griner, who enticed us into the merry society life in the first place. Dame Griner, whose husband is a big oriental importer with beaucoup jack, is now visiting in the East, and she likes to keep Mrs. Brindle all wised up with the fresh, new scandal.

"What do you think?" exclaims the leading lady of my life, when she's done plunging through what a two-cent stamp brought her.

"I don't. I give up right now," I respond. "What new wheeze has the old hen up her sleeve, my dear?"

"Mrs. Griner is not an old hen, Caleb! You mustn't call her that. She has never said things like that about you. Just think, she writes that Carol Freeman is coming out from Ohio to visit us!"

"And who is this Carol Freeman?" I squawk. "And what is the big idea of her visiting us?"

"Carol Freeman comes from one of the nicest families back there. She's Mrs. Griner's niece, and just the type of girl I've always wanted Lonnie to meet."

"Oh, that's how the wind whistles!" I chirp. "The poor girl should be warned before it is too late."

"Caleb Brindle, you are ridiculous! Lonnie needs a nice girl to give him some interest in life. The boy must find it dull here, with no amusement except teaching golf to a stupid old married couple. Hattie's niece is very pretty, I'm told. I remember her as a little girl, and she was attractive then. Hattie writes that she will spend two or three months out West. That will be just right. Lonnie will have time to get to know her well."

"Not to mention her getting a chance to know Lonnie well," I mutter. "I suppose that during the two or three months in which the beautiful niece from Ohio is to dazzle the woolly West, one Caleb Brindle will have to furnish the daily grapefruit and French pastry, and so forth."

"Are you trying to exasperate me? Naturally she is to be our guest—until Hattie gets back, at least. I want you to understand right now, Caleb—"

For several minutes I hear things, after which I decide that the time is ripe for me to sneak out to the garage and smoke a large black cigar.

A few days later the young lady from Ohio arrives, and is welcomed with open arms by Mrs. Brindle. After getting a good slant at Miss Carol Freeman, I'm kind of sorry I can't pull the open-arm stuff myself. She's prettier than a Puget Sound sunset, and class sticks out all over her like freckles on a small boy.

Alonzo is along with us when the train comes in, and the moment he gets a flash of Ohio's fairest, I can see he's cuckoo. That ain't surprising, though. The only male who could remain unmoved in Carol Freeman's presence would have to be an honest-to-gosh blind man, and Alonzo's eyes, like his mouth, are always in working order.

As I whirl the party through Cascade City in my faithful chariot, I hear the wife prattle to Miss Freeman:

"Do you golf, Carol? I suppose you must. Caleb and I have just taken up the game, and we're fascinated with it—just fascinated!"

"Oh, I have played it a little," admits Carol.

"You must come out with us. We can have some fine foursomes."

"Yes, you really must, Miss Freeman," adds Alonzo, putting it on for her benefit.

"Lonnie is a wonderful golfer, you know," the wife gargles. "He has been teaching us how to play, hasn't he, dear?" This to me. "If you don't play very well, I'm sure he can help you out, Carol. He knows just everything about golf, it seems."

"Well," sighs the Ohio girl, "there are many things I don't know about golf. Really, I don't believe I want to play very much of it while I'm here. I would rather do something else. Though, of course, if you want to play—"

"Anything you want to do, dear, is all right with us," the wife spills quickly.

## III

THE next week finds us pretty busy entertaining our charming guest, taking her on trips and the like. She keeps away from the golf-links, however—which disappoints Alonzo and Mrs. Brindle a lot more than it does me.

"I'm afraid, Caleb, that maybe Carol plays poorly and is too proud to go out



with us," speaks the spouse. "She imagines we're better than we really are."

"She's got enough winning ways without having to be a winner at golf," I snort. "By the way, how is Lonnie stacking up with her thus far? I suppose you won't be satisfied until he carries off the prize!"

"Don't be flippant, Caleb. I'm sure Lonnie is getting along well with her, although this is early in the day as yet. She listens to everything he has to say to her, I know."

"Listen is all anybody is able to do when he starts," I yodel rather nastily.

I can see that Alonzo is hanging around like ivy on a brick house, but I ain't sure he's overwhelming her. He ain't the only guy in town who finds her easy to look at. Several birds at the country club take pains to have Carol give them the once-over, and she seems to find one or two of them quite interesting.

One cooky she notices particularly is a young fellow who seems to be the private secretary, or something, of a fat old Easterner who has a cottage rented at the club. Not that this bird is much to rave over. He limps when he walks, has a very pale face, and wears big, ugly blue goggles. Carrying a portable typewriter and a briefcase, he looks just my idea of a male stenographer. Of course, having dirtied my hands in coal and pitchy wood most of my life, I expect I'm a bit narrow-minded. At least, he has it on Alonzo in one way. He seems to be working for a living.

Twirls will be twirls, and Carol runs right to form. This blue-goggled bimbo gets a flock of her sweet smiles, and at one of the country club dances she sits out a number of hops with him. Of course his limp keeps him from fox-trotting, but it ain't any handicap in his case.

Naturally the wife and Alonzo spot this, too, and I can see Mrs. Brindle don't crave it so much. She schemes up things to help our beloved cousin, and finally coaxes the Ohio frail into a foursome, promising to pair her off with Alonzo.

Miss Carol manages to fall down and hurt her wrist before the match, however, and she says she can't play for a few days. She does walk around a few holes with us, and of course Alonzo, the peerless but not painless instructor, has to show off. Neither the wife nor I are going very good, and he rides the pair of us like a movie hero on a movie horse.

"Didn't I tell you not to do that? Keep your head down! Don't you know how to keep your head still? Get your body into the swing! What do you think you're using on the putting-green—a brassie? Oh, what a dub shot! Will you ever play golf?"

Them's some of the verses in the song Alonzo is singing. Once upon a time I heard that the library and the links were the two places where nothing but silence should be heard; yet this egg makes more noise than a tray of dishes dropped on a concrete walk.

Carol Freeman deserts us at the end of the first nine. Before she speeds on she has to hand Alonzo an admiring glance and warble:

"You've such an impressive way of teaching golf, Mr. Bonbright! When my wrist is better I'm going to play a bit, and I'm sure you will be able to tell me a lot of things I don't know."

This makes Cousin Lonnie expand his chest to the fullest extent—all of an inch, at least. He is tickled almost purple as the girl smiles and bids us adieu, and me privately wondering what there was about the loud-voiced sap that could attract any fluff favorably.

Later the wife squawks to me that she believes things are beginning to break for Alonzo.

"Huh!" I snort. "How about this guy in goggles?"

"Oh, you mean Floyd What's-His-Name?" The superior half shrugs a scornful shoulder. "Compared to Lonnie, he is nothing. Carol is too sensible to bother seriously with him. I know!"

"Compared to Lonnie he's nothing, huh?" I mutter to myself. "Well, that makes him and Lonnie twins, then!"

It takes a week or two for Carol's wrist to get in good shape, and we have word from Mrs. Griner that she'll soon be in our midst.

"Fine stuff!" I remark. "That 'll be less ham and eggs to pay for, and less gas to buy for the old bus."

"Caleb, you should be ashamed!" You get one guess as to who is chirping. "I do hope Carol don't leave us before Alonzo reaches an understanding with her."

"He must be a slow worker, woman," I gargle; "or maybe she somehow resists his manly beauty successfully?"

"A girl like Carol is a real catch," snaps the wife, "and naturally she can't be wooed and won in a week. Give Lonnie time. She has more than a passing regard for him now, I'm sure."

## IV

A COUPLE of days later the Mary Varden opera-singers are to be in town, and Mrs. Brindle is bound to make up a box-party of four, including Alonzo and Carol. Strange to say, Cousin Lonnie gets a bright idea.

"Carol's wrist is all right now, and she can play," he yodels, smiling at her. "Why not make this a sporty affair? Let's have a foursome. Carol and I will play you two, and the losers—I mean the losing gentleman—will buy the box."

"But you don't know how I play," protests the Ohioan. "And I'm not positive I want to hear Mary Varden again. I was in Chicago when she was there."

I'm not crazy about any opera stuff myself, but I know enough not to bleat with the wife on the job.

"That's a fine idea, Lonnie," approves Mrs. Brindle. "We can play eighteen holes, and the loser treats."

I figure I will treat, fast enough. Alonzo ain't in the habit of blowing much jack, and I'm sure he has no idea of digging down. Carol Freeman might be a rotten golf-player herself, but he's probably good enough to make up for it; and I may as well confess the wife and I ain't no tough pair to trim.

The foursome is finally agreed upon, and on a cool Wednesday morning—the second night of the Mary Varden visit—Carol and Alonzo tangle in battle with the Brindle family on the country club course.

They win the first hole from us, we even it up on the second by a rare burst of luck, and then drop behind again on the long third.

Carol Freeman's game ain't nothing to hurrah about. She does manage to clout the ball most of the time, but her distance and direction are terrible. Also, her stance is not according to Hoyle. I can see Cousin Lonnie begin to chafe as we march on the fourth tee.

The girl from Ohio dubs her drive in awful fashion, and Alonzo is off.

"I hope you won't mind me advising you a bit now and then, Miss Freeman," he says. "You see, I—"

"Oh, I'd love to have you!" She smiles kind of funny. "I guess I'm rather ignorant of the finer points of golf."

"Well, if I were you I'd change my stance," he tells her. "And you mustn't wiggle so when you drive."

"Oh, mustn't I?" she says helplessly.

I figure the wife doped it out right when she guessed Carol was a bum golfer. Our Ohio visitor makes a frightful mess of the fourth hole, and, despite Alonzo's par four, the wife and I have the better aggregate score. The beloved cousin don't like it any more than mice do the family cat, and he passes Carol advice in giddy gobs.

The girl seems to be trying desperately hard, but she's unable to make the grade. Driving off from the fifth tee, she misses three swings before topping a weak one into the long grass in front of her.

"Miss Freeman, you must keep your head down!" yodels Alonzo.

"Oh, must I?" says she, still in that helpless tone.

As we play out the hole, I notice Cousin Lonnie grit his teeth several times. The girl does handle her clubs in an exasperating manner. More than once she fails to follow out his instructions, and then is deeply sorry when it is too late.

The short sixth adds to Alonzo's peeve. By some chance, Carol is within five feet of the green on her second shot. He hits the lawn with his drive, while the wife and I both bounce into a bunker.

With everything in their favor, the Ohioan bangs the ball with her mashie, and it sails fifty yards beyond the green. She hits it just about a thousand times too hard, that's all. Alonzo boils over.

"Great Heavens! What did you do that for?" he gargles. "Hit it easy! Hit it easy!"

"I tried to," she says, looking ready to cry.

"You must pay attention to what I tell you, Miss Freeman. You can never play golf unless you do."

The wife looks at me, and then at precious Cousin Lonnie. She scents trouble.

"I'm getting tired," she says. "What do you say we call this off at the end of the first nine? I don't believe I'll be able to negotiate the full eighteen."

"But that will hardly give us a chance to win," squawks Cousin Lonnie. "As there's a wager on this match, I think we ought to—"

"Oh, we'll call it off, Lonnie. Caleb will get the box for Mary Varden himself, and—"

This nicks my nanny. Here's a swell chance to make Alonzo blow a few berries for once in his life, and the wife wants to spoil it.

"How do you get that way, Mrs. Brindle?" I yelp. "A bet is a bet, and I ain't going to pay for no opera unless I'm beaten in this match!"

"Mr. Brindle is quite right," agrees Carol Freeman. "I realize my poor playing has hurt my partner's chances thus far, but maybe I'll do a little better on the next nine."

The expression on Alonzo's face don't register very much enthusiasm, but he nods glumly.

Outvoted, the spouse has to surrender, and the match resumes. At the end of the first nine the Brindle family team has a commanding lead, for Cousin Lonnie's partner improves very little on the last three holes.

Determined to catch up and save his lettuce, if he can, Alonzo takes the girl sternly in hand on the tenth. He shoots orders at her like a czar—which is typical of Alonzo, as the wife and I know.

"Hold your club like this! No, no—like this! Let it go back slowly, and then—oh, keep your eye on the ball! You'll never hit if you don't! Please stop shifting your feet while you swing. Good Lord, why did you do that?"

A record kept of his sputterings on the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth would read something like the above. He sure tells it to her.

"She thought he could tell her a lot of things she didn't know," I whisper to the wife at the thirteenth tee. "I wonder if she still thinks he has an impressive way of teaching golf!"

The superior half is not in a merry mood, however, and she burns me up with one swift glance. Further remarks on the tip of my tongue are promptly parked in cold storage.

The thirteenth is certainly unlucky for Alonzo and Carol, chiefly due to the girl's weird work on the fairway. It seems as if she's trying, but don't know what to do, and can never remember what she's told the second before. Alonzo's own game suffers, and when he misses a two-foot putt he swears right out.

"Oh, Mr. Bonbright!" cries Carol.

"Well, it's enough to make a saint swear!" snaps Cousin Lonnie. "If I ever saw such a—"

He stops in the nick of time. The girl gives him a queer look.

The fourteenth is an iron shot for a good player. Carol selects a jigger.

"No, no!" bawls Alonzo. "Use a wooden club!"

"I would rather use this, Mr. Freeman," she says meekly.

"But you can't do it. It isn't an iron shot for you."

"I want to try it, anyway."

For once she is stubborn, and drives with the jigger. She gets a beautiful drive, landing on the green within ten feet of the flag; and she goes down in one putt for the first birdie of the match.

Right pronto I smell something. On the last holes she plays her shots in an entirely different way, looking like another person altogether.

"That's the—the way to do it, Miss Freeman," utters Alonzo, in a feeble voice.

She snacks one two hundred yards on the fifteenth, and then turns to Cousin Lonnie.

"What club would you advise me to try now, Mr. Bonbright?"

"Oh, oh, a—a mid-iron," mumbles Alonzo.

"Why not a niblick shot?" she says sweetly.

Using that club, she approaches in beautiful style.

## V

THE remainder of the match is carboic acid to our dear cousin. With the girl suddenly shooting in such a surprising fashion, Alonzo's game goes all to pieces. It is Carol's chance to chide, and she does it in a honeyed fashion that makes him writhe. I note that her suggestions to him have the ones he hurled at her fair head cheated a million ways.

Although our lead is cut tremendously, Mrs. Brindle and I win out at the end of eighteen holes. The party is on Alonzo.

"We'll listen to Mary Varden with a great deal of pleasure this evening, old thing," I chirp. "This great victory makes even grand opera endurable!"

"Miss Freeman was a little off her game at first, or I think we—" begins Cousin Lonnie, looking kind of sick.

"I hope you'll excuse me, and not think me unpardonably rude," interrupts the Ohio maid, "but I told you I didn't really care to hear Mary Varden again. Floyd—I mean Mr. Silcott—asked me to go for an automobile ride this evening, and while I didn't promise—oh, you won't mind very much if I don't go to the opera to-night, will you?"

She is very polite about it, but we can see she means it. Naturally we have to capitulate.

"I'm so sorry!" the girl purrs. "And now I must try to find Mr. Silcott and let him know definitely before he returns to the city."

Away she dashes, and Alonzo looks sicker than ever.

"You put your big foot in it that time!" Mrs. Brindle tells him, and not too pleasantly. "You said too much."

"I'll say so!" I add cheerily. "I know something about wood-piles, and there sure is a nigger parked—there's your friend Mrs. Griner getting out of her hack."

So it is. The big limousine has just rolled in.

"Oh, Hattie!" calls the wife, and there's a grand reunion such as females love to stage.

"And where is Carol?" finally asks Mrs. Griner.

"She was golfing with us, but she went to speak to a friend of hers—Silcott, I think she said."

"So Floyd Silcott is here!" yodels Carol's aunt. "I had an idea he would be. I heard his father had come West, and I suppose he brought Floyd with him."

"But who are the Silcotts?" the wife wants to know.

"Why, you must know of Alexander Silcott, the rich mining man. I think he is

out West to form another great syndicate. Floyd is his only son, and of course he's a big catch. He always was crazy about Carol, but they quarreled some time ago. Made up again, eh? Carol's mother will be delighted!"

"But is Floyd Silcott a fellow with blue goggles and a limp? I thought that bird was a secretary or something," I squawk.

"Yes, Floyd wears goggles and limps," beams Mrs. Griner. "That's what the war did to him; and he works hard, even if he is so rich. He's his father's right-hand man. Old Alexander was terribly taken back when Floyd nearly lost his sight."

"Of course we had no idea who the young man was, or we—" the wife starts gamely.

"Did you say Carol had been golfing with you?" breaks in Mrs. Griner, on another tangent. "How in the world did you persuade her? She wasn't going to touch a club out here. She told me that her wrist needed rest, and that she was tired of the game."

"She—she is really a good player?" gables Alonzo, speaking for the first time.

"Is she? Didn't I write and tell you, Grace? Carol is the woman champion of Ohio, and considered the best girl player in the Middle West. Ohio is the home of Presidents and good golf-players, they say. Indeed, yes—Carol Freeman can play wonderfully well."

The wife bites her lip. I want to grin, but daren't. Alonzo gets his clam open with an effort.

"You'll excuse me, I hope," he says. "I—I have some seats for the opera to order, and I'd better be—"

Well, Alonzo walked away like a good golfer, at least. His head was down, and he seemed to be keeping it there.

#### EACH DAY'S PERFECTNESS

TO-DAY'S enough; I will not mourn  
The past, which like a robe outworn  
One's soul must ever cast aside  
To wear the new and the untried.  
Though yesterday in dreams be fair,  
It is a shroud that dead men wear;  
And though to-morrow is begun,  
It lies upon fate's loom half-spun;  
So it is good that I should dress  
My life in each day's perfectness.

Harry Kemp



# The Trail of Conflict\*

A MODERN ROMANCE OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE IN EAST AND WEST

By Emilie Loring

Author of "The Key to Many Doors," etc.

## XVIII

JERRY never knew how long she stood with her eyes fixed in fascinated terror on that heap in the bunk. Should she mount Patches as soon as her frenzied feet would take her to him, or should she stay and help the man, if he were wounded? Head urged flight, heart urged help. She remembered the parable of the good Samaritan, only to remind herself that the rescuer had been a man.

Another moan from the bunk decided her. Setting the door wide, she drew her six-shooter from its holster—unloaded as it was, it gave her a feeling of strategic advantage—and, with the gun gripped tight in her hand, tiptoed across the room.

Every vestige of color had fled from her face as with icy, shaking fingers she lifted a corner of the dingy blanket. Under it a man lay on his face, his hands and feet securely tied.

"Beechy!"

The walls of the cabin flung back the girl's hoarse whisper.

"Beechy! Beechy! Beechy!" they chorused.

Jerry looked down in dumb incredulity. She recognized the rampant reddish hair, the dent at the corner of one exposed eye. As if her voice had penetrated to his consciousness, the man rolled toward her. The six-shooter clattered to the floor. The stunning effect of her discovery was quickly tempered by the man's condition. Beechy, the man who had saved Steve's life, was hurt, helpless.

Her fingers attacked the knots in the rope which bound him. She tugged, she pulled, without making the least impres-

sion. Was there not something in the room which would cut? The minutes were flying! Some one might come.

She ran to the cupboard and seized a tin can. The cover was jagged. She tried to saw the rope with that, but it made no impression on the twisted hemp. She threw it from her and looked about the room again. Then she rubbed her eyes. Was that a knife sticking in the wall above the bunk, or was she just seeing it?

She stepped up on the edge of the bunk and touched it. It was real! With an inarticulate cry of triumph, the girl seized it. With teeth set hard in her under lip, she attacked the rope again.

She stopped every few moments to listen. Once she caught the far-off call of a coyote. Then Patches whinnied. She dropped in a little heap on the floor, her hand pressed hard against her heart to still its thumping; but nothing stirred outside. She went on with her work. It seemed ages before she had freed Beechy's arms, and another century of time before the cords were cut that bound his feet.

She touched his head gently. There was no trace of blood. He must have been stunned and tied, his captors relying upon the remoteless and abandoned appearance of the shack to cover their work.

Why had they done it, Jerry wondered? Beechy had said that he had contracted to work on the railroad. She remembered his answer to Steve's protest:

"You know, there is honor among thieves."

Had he been linked up with Ranlett? But Ranlett had nothing to do with the railroad.

If she could only get him up! When

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she tried to lift him, the clumsy cartridge-belt with the dangling holster kept getting in her way. With an impatient exclamation, she unfastened it and dropped it to the floor. Then she slid the man's feet from the bunk, put her arms under him, and lifted him. His head rolled to her shoulder.

How hot it was! If only she had water! Her eyes roved about the cabin. No hope there. Through the doorway, not twenty yards away, she could see the pool, with the carcass of the calf lying beyond it. With the possibility of lurking enemies, had she the courage to go out there?

Beechy stirred and lifted heavy lids. The eyes beneath them were glazed with pain. He looked about the room, then up at the face bending over him. His gaze lingered a moment dreamily, then incredulously; then it seemed as if his brain made a superhuman effort to break the spell that bound it.

"Mrs. Lieut!" He tried to get to his feet, but his head rolled weakly back to the girl's shoulder. "Go! Go!" he whispered hoarsely.

He made another effort to sit up. He gripped the edge of the bunk till the flesh under his finger-nails showed white.

"If I could get water to—cool this—this devilish fire in my head! Go! Ranlett will—" His clearing gaze fastened on the long scratch on her cheek. "For the love of God, did they get you, too?"

Jerry gently forced him back.

"No, no—I fell. Lie still, Beechy, while I go for water. Every moment that you keep quiet counts. Your head is not cut; there is nothing the matter that I can discover, except that you were stunned. Don't move while I am gone. When I come back, we will get away from here. We—we *must*. Remember that my safety depends upon you now, and keep perfectly still until I come back."

It was quite the reverse, for his safety depended upon her, Jerry thought; but she knew his type. Her need of his help would do more than anything else to clear his mind. She picked up the tin can she had used as a saw, and went to the door. She looked back. Beechy was lying with closed eyes, the lines about his mouth relaxed.

The sun had dropped behind a high mountain, but the air was sultry. A tinge of rose had replaced the gold of the afternoon coloring. In the southwest an unobtrusive bank of cloud had appeared. The

tumbleweed still stirred with every breath of air, but everything else was still. Jerry could see something that she had not noticed from above—parallel grooves in the ground through the middle of the hollow.

"That's strange! Those ruts look like the marks of wagon wheels; but how could a wagon get down here?" she thought.

She hesitated an instant on the threshold. Fortunately the pool was on a level with the cabin. Had the shack been on the opposite side of the hollow, she would have had a ten-foot drop before she reached the level. The small body of water looked a thousand miles away, and the room behind her, which had looked so sinister and forbidding a while before, seemed like a haven of refuge. So quickly do values shift in the crisis of life!

"The more you dread the thing you have to do, the more you should hustle to get it behind you," Jerry admonished herself, and made a dash for the pool.

For an instant the air seemed full of dark, flapping wings; then it cleared. She kept her eyes resolutely away from the body of the calf. The water was low. She had to lie flat to reach it. She wasted time in trying to dip deep enough to get clear of the tumbleweed which floated on the surface. When she had it to her satisfaction, she sat back on her heels and inspected the contents of the dripping can.

"This will have to do," she announced to the world at large. "I—"

"That depends on what you're getting it for, don't it?" inquired a voice behind her.

The insolence of it, the portent of it, brought Jerry to her feet. The precious water slopped wastefully. She had a sense of suspended animation as she looked up at the man sardonically observing her, then a sense of sudden, ungovernable panic. It was the late manager of the Double O, with the bridle of his horse—the Piker, a big, lanky chestnut—in his left hand.

"Ranlett!"

Her own frightened whisper infuriated her. She had spoken to the man looming over her as seldom as she conveniently could, for she had always distrusted him. She looked at him now as if seeing him for the first time. His black hair had a white streak from the middle of his forehead to his neck, which had earned him the sobriquet of "the Skunk." His eyes were steel-gray, his thin-lipped mouth was noth-

ing more than a crooked slit in his face, his chin was stubborn. Jerry's gaze returned to that feature and lingered.

Apparently Ranlett was as much amazed to see her as she had been startled at his appearance. She felt as if he had her wriggling under a microscope, pinned by the needle points in his eyes, as he observed caustically:

"Well, now that you've sized me up, it's my turn. What are you doing so far from the Double O, and alone? Perhaps you're not alone—what?"

His attitude, the lines of his shoulders, his voice, bristled with suspicion.

The girl's mind indulged in one frenzied merry-go-round before it settled down to constructive thinking. For the first time in her life she was squarely and uncompromisingly up against danger. Ranlett must not suspect that she had been in the shack, that Beechy was unbound. He might be in no way responsible for the condition in which she had found the ex-sergeant, but she couldn't take a chance with Carl's words still echoing in her ears:

"For the love of God, did they get you, too?"

If she could only get him away from the place! The throbbing pulse in her throat, which gave the impression of delicate wings beating futilely against bars, was her only sign of agitation as she answered the man's question gaily.

"I don't wonder you ask, Mr. Ranlett. I'm a sight!" She laid a finger cautiously against her scratched cheek, and laughed—a laugh that was a masterpiece of its kind. "I started for Bear Creek to inquire for Mrs. Carey, but yielded to the temptation to ride to the top of the hill. Pandora with her box has nothing on me for curiosity; I was born with an irresistible desire to look on the other side of things and places."

The sudden narrowing of his eyes set her to wondering what false note she had struck, even as she went on.

"When I dismounted, the better to peer down into this hollow, something gave a scream as of a thousand furies rampant." Her shudder was genuine. "The sound did direful things to Patches's nerves. He bolted down the hill. I bolted after him. I stumbled over something which must have been the keystone of the slope, or its twin, for the hillside gave way and landed me in an ignominious heap of dirt and

gravel back of that shack. A rolling body gathers some scratches," she paraphrased flippantly, as she again touched her bruised face.

"I'll say you're some little talker, Mrs. Courtlandt, when—when you're frightened! You've never favored me with a word before," observed Ranlett insolently.

Two red spots burned like beacons in Jerry's cheeks. She knew that she had been garrulous, that she had been talking against time; but it was maddening to be told so. Every moment that she held the attention of the late manager of the Double O counted for Beechy. She needed all her strength of purpose to keep her eyes from wandering to the door of the shack. It acted like a malevolent magnet.

"Where is your horse?"

"Back of the cabin. I came here to get water for him."

"Have you been in the shack?"

"In the shack!" The shudder with which the girl turned her back upon it would have made Nazimova pale with envy. "That—that gruesome-looking place? No, indeed!"

"Then you are not curious when it comes to empty houses? You're not consistent, Pandora. Where did you get that can?"

Jerry felt as if she was under a machine-gun fire of words. The man's insolence infuriated her, but she didn't dare resent it, for fear he would leave her and investigate the cabin. She looked down at the can which she still held between finger and thumb, then at the bed of ashes beside the pool.

"Did I find it there or behind the shack?" she said, as if questioning herself. "Is it yours? Take it, if you want it."

"You know damned well you didn't pick it up outside!" Ranlett exploded, as he caught the girl by the shoulder. She felt his hot flesh through her thin blouse. "You've been in that shack, and you've—"

"Take your hand away—quick!" Jerry commanded, her voice hoarse, her face white, her eyes blazing.

"I'll let you go when I get good and ready!" The man sank his fingers deeper into her shoulder, to emphasize his words. "What's that yellow coyote in there been telling you?"

"Nothin' to your advantage, Ranlett! Put up your hands, an' put 'em up quick!" interrupted a voice.

It was Beechy—Beechy leveling Jerry's six-shooter at Ranlett's head. His face was white, one eye was almost closed, but he had an air of cocky unconcern.

"Mrs. Lieut, grab his horse. No, you don't!" he cried, as the late manager of the Double O, his arms held high above his head, tried to trip the girl. A bullet whizzed so close to Ranlett's ear that he turned a sickly green. "You see, I'm a little nervous, and I'm not used to this old-time six-shooter. I've been using a Colt forty-five. I'll get the range better next time, and it 'll come closer. I didn't get my badge in the army for shooting craps! Frisk his pockets, Mrs. Lieut!"

For one second Jerry hesitated.

"Quick! Get busy, unless you want more of his pack down on us! That's the stuff! Now you're talking!" Beechy added, as the girl produced a corpulent revolver from a hip pocket.

Ranlett's voice was hoarse with fury as he said:

"You'll need that gun, Beechy, when Courtlandt finds that you and the missus have been meeting. You sure have a way with the ladies!"

Jerry's cry was submerged in Beechy's oath. The man's face was like granite, as gray, as immovable. Only his eyes blazed. His tone was as cold and passionless as his face.

"You'll pay for that, Ranlett, but not now. Just for fear your gang will butt in, we'll make our getaway; but remember—I'm coming back. I want you, and I want the feller that cracked my head. Hand me his gun, Mrs. Lieut. Lead his horse and yours to the top of the hill and wait. Don't look around—get me?"

"Yes, I get you, sergeant; but you won't—"

Jerry hesitated, with the bridle of Ranlett's big chestnut in her hand.

"Obey orders, and obey 'em quick!"

And Jerry obeyed. With the quick agility that Tommy had taught her, she mounted Ranlett's horse and turned him in the direction of the shack. The animal side-stepped and tried to look in the direction of his master, but the girl touched him with her spurs and urged him on.

Next she unhitched Patches. She looked like a slender boy as she led her horse up the slope with a backward-stretched left hand. The moments that she spent in ascending were one long prayer that the hill-

side would not repeat its disappearing trick. She felt an irresistible desire to look back, but she remembered the salty fate of Lot's wife, and kept doggedly on.

As she gained the shelter of the pines at the top of the hill, she heard a shot. Her face went white. Who had fired it—Ranlett or Beechy? Beechy was weak from the blow on his head, and he might easily be overcome. She listened.

A flock of magpies alighted in the tree above her, observed the strange figure below them for a moment, and then flew away in noisy haste. As the sound of their raucous voices died in the distance, Jerry heard another sound—the sound of gravel slipping. Who was coming?

She hastily changed mounts, and twisted her hand in the bridle of the big horse. If it were Ranlett, she would race at break-neck speed toward Greyson's—the X Y Z was nearer than the Double O—taking the Piker with her. Her breath came so hard that it hurt her throat. Her eyes dilated with excitement, she watched the brow of the hill.

The sound of the slipping gravel came nearer and nearer. Then she heard labored breathing. The suspense was unendurable. She felt as if she must scream.

A man staggered into sight. It was Beechy. She slipped from her horse and called him softly.

"This way—quick!"

As he stumbled toward her, she noted the pallor of his face. She didn't dare leave the horses to go to his assistance. With a bridle in each hand, she went forward to meet him.

"I'm about all—in, Mrs. Lieut," he panted. "The blow and this climb have about finished a job the—war—started."

She slipped her arm under his. Her eyes were tender with concern.

"Lean on me a moment. You mustn't give way now, Beechy. Get on Ranlett's horse. We must get away from here. He may follow us."

Carl laughed weakly.

"Follow? Nothing doing! Just to make sure he wouldn't, I put a bullet through his leg. I couldn't have him interfering with the job you an' I have to put across. He'll go as far as the shack while the going's good."

"But he may starve!"

"You should worry! There are provisions enough for a siege cached under



that cabin. Forget him! If you're the good little sport I think you are, you've got a job—"

"Listen!"

Jerry laid her hand over her heart. Beechy raised his heavy head from the side of the horse, where he had rested it. His eyes narrowed into mere slits. From the hillside came the sound of slipping gravel.

"Well, I'll be—"

"It's Ranlett! He's creeping up!" the girl whispered tensely. "You must mount. He may have found a gun." Then, as Beechy shook his head weakly: "If you don't, I shall stay with you, and you may never get a chance to tell me what to do."

"Help me up!" The white beneath Beechy's skin had changed to crimson. His teeth clenched as he pulled himself into the saddle. He held tight to the horn with his two hands. "Mount—quick!" he panted. "Now ride close beside me while I tell you—"

For an instant his eyes lost their purpose. He slipped over to one side. Jerry caught him and steadied him.

"Tention, company!" he drawled foolishly, as he tried to straighten in the saddle.

"You must keep on, Beechy! Grip your mind tight till we reach the lieutenant," pleaded the girl, always with one ear turned to the sinister slipping sound that drew nearer and nearer up the hillside.

It seemed as if the reference to Steve Courtlandt had power to conjure strength. With a stifled groan, the man eased himself in the saddle.

"I can ride this way. Don't lose your sand, Mrs. Lieut! I've pulled through worse scrapes than this. We'll beat 'em yet!"

They left the pines and began the descent of the hill. The innocent cloud-bank in the southwest had spread in great jagged peaks until it darkened the heavens and the fields beneath them. The stream looked like a drab ribbon splashed with white. They rode silently. Beechy conserved his strength.

"When we get to the level, I'll talk," he vouchsafed once through blue lips.

Jerry kept close beside him. Across the valley lights were beginning to appear in the X Y Z. She felt as if she was in a horrid nightmare, from which she must awake to find herself safe in her own charming rooms at the Double O.

Beechy's voice dispelled her illusion. In

obedience to a gesture of his, she pulled up her horse as they reached the level.

"We've got to work quick, Mrs. Lieut. This rustling dope of Ranlett's is a bluff. When he cut the fences in Lower Field, he figured that the whole Double O outfit would hunt for the cattle in that direction—away from the railroad."

"The railroad?"

"Yes. Listen! No, I'm not going to fall—not till I've put you wise." The knuckles of his hand showed white as he gripped the saddle-horn. "To-night a car carrying silver bricks from the mint in Philadelphia goes through on its way to the coast. It's attached to the regular evening train. It's under armed guard, but—Ranlett—"

It was characteristic of the girl that, instead of demanding how he knew, she announced breathlessly:

"We must reach that train before Ranlett's gang!"

"You've said it! Ranlett's staged the party at Devil's Hold-Up. It's only fifteen miles from the X Y Z, but ten of that fifteen minutes is wilderness. We've got to stop that train before it gets to Greyson's crossing."

"I'll ride for the X Y Z and get Bruce Greyson. I don't know where Steve is," interrupted the girl breathlessly. "You go on to the Double O. The Piker will know his way there in the dark. About ten o'clock, did you say?"

"Yes," Beechy's voice was weaker. "Don't let any one know but Greyson. Ranlett has the place honeycombed with spies. I'll stay here for a while. If he comes—moseying over—the hill—"

Suddenly he slipped from the saddle to the ground, and stretched flat on his back.

"A-ah! That's better," he groaned. He tried to smile up into the concerned face bent over him. "*C'est drôle, ça!* I bragged that I was through with the good old U. S. A., and the minute I find that I'm caught in a plot against her I throw up my hands. I knew that Ranlett would kill me if I backed out, but I'd—I'd rather—die."

"But you're not going to die, Beechy! And we'll win out," the girl comforted eagerly. "Oh, how can I leave you like this—"

"Mount that pony again—quick!" He gathered his strength with a superhuman effort. "Don't think of me. I'll rest here,

and then I'll move on, I promise. I want to—get out—of—this scrape as much as—you want me to. That's right! Up you—go!"

The last word was a whisper. Beechy struggled to one elbow.

"Tell Greyson, if he gets a chance—to put a bullet through the man—Ranlett took on—in my place. I mean that ranger-ider at Bear—Creek Ranch!"

### XIX

BENSON regarded Ming Soy in stunned amazement. Her words, "She never come back—not all this time!" revolved stupidly in his brain. They had been catapulted into the midst of his passionate declaration to Peggy. What she would have answered he never would know now.

The color which the touch of his lips had brought to the girl's face had faded, and she was regarding the Chinese woman with terrified eyes. She laid a trembling hand on Benson's arm.

"Thank God, I haven't made you hate me!" he thought fervently, as he gripped her cold fingers in a comforting clasp.

His faith in the wisdom of a surprise attack had been built upon a rock, after all.

"Tell me again, Ming Soy, just when Mrs. Courtlandt started, and what she said to you."

In her excitement Ming Soy's English kept tripping her up, but Benson got a fairly clear idea of what had happened.

"I watch her ride—not to the field she tole me—no—down the road. I listened for shoots. No shoots. No noding. No noding in field. When Ming Soy see you 'way down road, Ming Soy bleat glong."

Benson's mind had been working with machine-like speed while he listened. The girl beside him drew a long breath. He laid his lips upon her hand for a moment.

"Don't worry! I'll find her, Peg-o'-My-Heart. She has probably dropped in at Bear Creek Ranch to see the new arrival, and has forgotten the time. Women are like that when there's a baby!" He advanced the theory with a light-hearted laugh which, he flattered himself, was a marvel of its kind; but it merely drew a long, quivering sob from the girl. "Just for company, I'll ride down to meet her."

"I'll go with you," announced Peggy eagerly.

"Nothing doing! You'll go back to the house with Ming Soy. Don't let Hopi Soy

work off any of his thrift ideas on the dinner. If Jerry has been riding all afternoon, she'll be famished; and I—I feel as if I could eat a raw mountain lion this minute. I'll take the horses back to the corral and get a fresh mount."

"Please—Tommy—take me!"

Benson closed his ears heroically against the wiles of his own particular Circe. He shook his head, and his grave eyes met the girl's squarely.

"Be a good little sport, Peg. I can go faster without you. Besides, Jerry may be back before me, and she would be anxious if you were not here."

"All right, Tommy! Come, Ming Soy."

Benson could get no satisfaction from the man in charge of the corral. He questioned him as he watched him shift the saddle from Soapy to a powerful black. Slowman only knew that Mrs. Courtlandt came for Patches at about two o'clock. She was humming and laughing softly to herself as she led the horse off, quite as if she had heard some good news—or was up to some mischief. Women were like that when they had something up their sleeve, he'd noticed.

None of the boys who had gone after the shorthorns had returned. Mr. Courtlandt had phoned the corral from Slippery Bend that he wouldn't get back to the ranch until morning, and he wanted a sharp watch kept over the horses.

"By cripes, when he said *that*," Slowman added, looking at Benson with eyes so curiously crossed that they appeared to regard an object from the north and south extremes of the pole of vision, "it sent the creeps all over me. It was almost as good as if I'd gone back to the days of honest-to-God hold-ups an' rustlin's. I'm sorry about Mrs. Courtlandt, Mr. Tommy, but don't you worry. You'll like as not find her over takin' care of Jim Carey's baby. I hear the kid's a boy," he concluded, with a sheepish grin.

As Benson rode out from the corral he looked at the bank of clouds in the southwest and put spurs to his horse. Ming Soy, under cross-examination, had held stoutly to her statement that Jerry had not gone to the field behind the ranch-house. He would ride to the B C first.

On the rustic bridge that spanned the stream he stopped to reconnoiter, and then went on and rounded the clump of cottonwoods that screened the Bear Creek build-

ings from his view. They were beginning to lose their outline in the deepening gloom. The fast-spreading clouds were letting down a curtain of darkness.

Benson had ridden but a few hundred yards when he pulled the black up short. What was that? He listened. The air was still with that curious sinister calm which precedes a storm.

The sound came again. It was the whinny of a horse, but it was not from the direction of the B C ranch. It came from the level at the foot of the hills beyond.

Tommy's imaginings as he raced across the field would have provided material for a five-reel thriller. They blew up like a pricked balloon, however, when he was near enough to the whinnying horse to discover that it was not Patches, but Ranlett's favorite mount, the Piker. He gave voice to a mild but expressive swear-word.

"Now what's to pay?" he muttered, as he flung himself from the saddle and bent over the outstretched figure half buried in the long grass.

"Beechy!" he exclaimed incredulously. "How the dickens did you—"

The recumbent man lifted heavy lids.

"Comment ça—" Returning consciousness cleared the haze from the blue eyes. "Mr. Benson—you—did she find you—instead of—"

Beechy's voice broke, and his eyes closed again.

"Beechy! Beechy! Rouse yourself! You must help me," Tommy pleaded. "Have you seen Mrs. Courtlandt? She's—she's lost! Your lieutenant can't find his wife, Beechy!"

"Mon lieutenant?" The blue eyes looked up at Benson in a daze. "What's that you said, Mr. Benson—lost his wife? You're wrong. You've got another guess coming." With cautious effort he raised himself on his elbow. "Prop me up—that's better. Don't worry about Mrs. Lieut. She's a good little sport. She must be getting near the X Y Z by now."

His voice was clearer, the color was coming back to his lips.

"She's safe—unhurt?" Tommy shouted.

"Sure, man! Nothing could happen to a woman like her—don't you know that? She's riding like the devil to cut off—"

In his excitement Beechy jerked himself erect. In the next moment he was a crumpled heap on the ground.

Tommy emptied the canteen he had tied

to his saddle-horn, for the Lord only knew what emergency, over the white face. His tense nerves relaxed. Jerry had been all right when Beechy saw her last, and that couldn't have been so very long ago. If she was at Greyson's, she was safe; but what the dickens had she been doing all the afternoon, Tommy wondered?

Now that he had her accounted for, he must get Beechy under cover. With an anxious glance at the threatening sky overhead, he spoke to the man on the ground.

Beechy was quite conscious again. He listened intelligently as Tommy outlined his plan for getting him to Bear Creek Ranch. He wasted no strength on words, but with Benson's help finally mounted the Piker. He put his arms around the horse's neck and fell forward on his mane. Benson steadied him with one hand. Side by side the two horses made their way to the buildings, now nothing but a blotch of darkness.

Jim Carey dashed out of the corral as the two rode up. He was a tall, good-looking man, with black eyes that twitched nervously as he talked.

"Is that you, Small? Where the devil—"

He broke off in astonishment as he saw the figure flung forward on the Piker's neck.

"It's not Small, Carey. I'm Benson, from the Double O," Tommy called from out the gloom. "I picked up a man at the foot of the hill who was about all in. He was Courtlandt's sergeant overseas. Help me get him down, will you?"

"We'll take him into Small's cabin. This way!"

The two men carried Beechy into the shack and laid him on a bed. Carey lighted a lamp. He came back and looked down at the unconscious man, who lay with his red hair roughly tousled and the bruise under his eye a purplish red.

"I'll get Mother Eagan. I—I suppose you know what's come?" Carey asked with awkward pride.

"I heard that the stork was playing a one-night-stand engagement in this county. Is Mrs. Carey getting on all right?" Tommy asked, as he busied himself unfastening Beechy's clothes. "What is it, Carl?"

The injured man struggled to one elbow, his eyes blazing with excitement.

"Grab his horse! Mrs. Lieut, I'll get the range better next time. Ranlett—"

He dropped back on the pillow, and the fever died down in his eyes. He looked up into Benson's anxious face.

"Don't mind what I said," he pleaded weakly. "I was dreaming, but—but—I guess you'd better ride after Mrs. Lieut and be sure she's all right. Ranlett's gang—"

"Ranlett's gang!" Both men bent over him. "What do you mean, Beechy?" Benson asked tensely.

"Bolster me up! That's right. That infernal pounding inside me's quieting down." He drew a cautious breath and smiled wanly into the face above him. "Did you see that? It came as easy as spending money. Who's that? Where am I?" he demanded, as he caught sight of Jim Carey and looked around the room.

"You are at Bear Creek Ranch, and this is Carey, the owner."

"Send him out, Mr. Benson. I've got something to say to you."

"But Carey is—"

"Send him out," Beechy reiterated weakly, and closed his eyes, as if he was again slipping into a coma.

"You'd better go, Jim. There's some deviltry afoot, and Beechy knows what it is. Send Mother Eagan down in ten minutes, if she can be spared."

Carey looked down at the motionless figure on the bed.

"I wonder if he knows anything about Small!" he whispered. "He left early this morning, and—"

"You mean?"

"The same," answered Carey enigmatically, and left the cabin.

The wind banged the door after him. Benson could see Beechy wince; then he was conscious of what was going on about him.

"He's gone, Carl," he whispered.

Beechy's lips twisted in a smile as he opened his eyes and eased himself on his elbow.

"I reckoned we'd shake him if I played possum. I'm feelin' better every minute. Get a paper and pencil, Mr. Benson. I want you to take something down for me. This bogus heart of mine is likely to pound on for years, and then again it may shut up shop any minute."

"I'll do it, Beechy; but first tell me about Mrs. Courtlandt. I must know that she is safe."

"She's safe, all right. She started for

the X Y Z and Greyson. I kept my brain steady till she got out of sight. She was riding her own horse. I'm not deceiving you. I wouldn't have any harm come to her for her own sake, let alone the lieutenant's. Now you listen, and put down what I tell you—*sabe?*"

Beechy told the story of his acquaintance with Ranlett, with frequent pauses for rest and to get his breath. Some one on the border, he wouldn't tell who, had sent him to the manager of the Double O.

Outside, the wind rose steadily. It flung itself against the corners of the small building, and shook the window-frames as a terrier does a rat. The flame in the lamp flickered and steadied.

"Get me straight, Mr. Benson," Beechy concluded. "I ain't excusing myself, I was dead wrong—but Ranlett caught me when I was bitter and discouraged. He set out as how we were to pull off this hold-up on a carful of gold belonging to some war-time millionaires who had made their money in munitions. Then this morning I got a hint 'twas government money. I up and had it out with Ranlett. I allowed I'd touch nothing belonging to the government. His eyes got like red-hot coals."

"You don't think for a minute you'll get away with turning goody-goody after hearing my plans, do you?" says he, his hand twitching.

"No, I don't, Ranlett," says I; "but you want to remember that thieving's one thing and murder's another."

"Then, *crack!* It was like a shell bursting, and I didn't know anything more till I looked up into what seemed two shimmering gold stars. The lieutenant's wife was holding me."

"Who hit you—Ranlett?"

"Not on your life! He's taking no chances. He wasn't even figuring in the hold-up to-night. He's to direct operations from a dugout in the rear. It was Carey's range-rider."

"What?"

"He'd found out I was linked up with the lieutenant. Now you know why I wouldn't tell before—who's coming?"

The knock preceded the entrance of Mother Eagan. She fairly blew into the room. Her round, shining face was red, and she was panting from exertion.

The man on the bed straightened up, smoothed his hair, adjusted the collar of his shirt, and turned reckless, smiling blue



eyes upon his visitor. She was a woman, therefore to be impressed, irrespective of age or size or charm. That was Beechy, Benson thought, as he watched the wounded man. He was a curious combination of characteristics.

The woman looked from one to the other.

"Where's the man I was sent down to drag back to life?" she asked with a good-natured chuckle. Her eyes lingered on Beechy. "You don't look sick to me!"

Benson slipped the paper he held into his pocket.

"Make him lie down and keep quiet, Mother Eagan, and put something on that bruise. I'll go on to the X Y Z now that you're being taken care of, Beechy."

"All right—Mr. Greyson may need help in that little matter I was telling you about. Mother Eagan, it sure is good to see you! You're the handsomest white woman I've seen since I left the border—you and—"

Benson closed the cabin door behind him. Beechy was incorrigible, but Mother Eagan was fool-proof. She would laugh and volley back at him while she made his poor racked body comfortable.

When Tommy reached the pack-trail which led toward the X Y Z, he pulled up his horse. He looked back at the buildings of the B C, then speculatively at the hill behind them.

On the other side of that hill Beechy had left Ranlett. Suppose, just suppose, that the late manager of the Double O was not incapacitated as effectually as his assailant thought? Suppose that he should be able to make his getaway, and to put the bandits on their guard? Mrs. Steve was doubtless with Greyson by this time, planning to checkmate the bad men. Wasn't it up to Benson to make sure of their leader, the Skunk?

Without giving his bump of caution time to rouse from its habitual state of coma, Tommy made for the hill. Lightning crackled the sky, the rain came.

"It ain't no use to grumble and complain;  
It's just as cheap and easy to rejoice.  
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,  
Why, rain's my choice!"

Tommy quoted the Indiana poet's cheery philosophy as he pulled the broad brim of his hat down and the collar of his shirt up.

The spectral grove, when he entered it, was a protection from wind and rain. He dismounted when he reached the pines on

the crest of the hill, from which he could look down into Buzzard's Hollow. Fortunately he knew every foot of the surrounding country. In the years he had been at the Double O he had explored foothills and valleys far and near, and had fished for miles along the mountain streams.

With flash-light in one hand and his forty-five in the other, Benson waited for the lightning. He must get his bearings.

The storm rattled and crashed among the mountains. It was deafening, but—what was that? In the interval between crashes he had caught another sound. It was the spasmodic roar and hum of an airplane. In that place, at that hour, it was a sinister sound.

In a flash, Tommy's mind reverted to the plane which had passed over the stream on Sunday. Was this the same machine? If so, why was it returning to this lonely spot?

Benson's hands were like ice as, standing behind the bole of a giant spruce, he watched the progress of the airplane. The lightning flashed steadily. Against the glare of the sky the flying shape was silhouetted. Almost instantly, as if assured of his bearings, the pilot shut off his motor and spiraled down toward the hollow. The machine lighted as softly on the carpet of tumbleweed as might a fluff of thistledown. It made a smooth three-point landing.

"That pilot's a veteran. None of the amateur's bump in his," Benson muttered, at the same time subconsciously thanking the great god Thor for his cooperation as he took advantage of a reverberating roll of thunder to slide down the hillside. He went so amazingly fast that he would have come up against the wall of the shack with a crash had he not seized a shrub and stopped himself in time.

Through the cracks between the imperfectly matched boards that made the wall he could see light. On hands and knees, his heart thumping as only that well-regulated organ can thump in the breast of a brave man who realizes the risk he is running, Tommy put his ear to a crack. He heard the sound of voices, and his nostrils were filled with the odor of cigaret-smoke. He recognized Ranlett's high-pitched nasal tones. Evidently the pilot had brought a passenger, for Benson could distinguish two other voices. The late manager's was weak, as if with pain, but it held an ugly note.

"That's better, Marks. That 'll stop the bleeding. I was a fool to try to follow

that fellow Beechy; but—but I was mad to get at him. Bill Small swore that he'd fixed him so that he wouldn't move again. I don't know now whether he believed it, or if he was trying to double-cross me."

"Nice fella, Beechy! We'd better be getting out of this. He may give the alarm."

Benson had never heard the second voice before. It was thick and guttural, and evidently belonged to the pilot. Marks must have been the passenger.

"He can't. He's all in. He could hardly get up that hill. Bad heart. Even if he told the girl—"

"A girl in it? Good day! I'm through!"

"Hold on, young feller! Don't get cold feet so easily. I don't know where he met up with her, but she can't get far. There's no telephone at the B C, and the lines connecting the X Y Z and the Double O with each other and Slippery Bend are 'out of order.'" There was a sardonic note in his voice as he mimicked the stereotyped words. "We're safe, I tell you. The boys will pull off that little stunt and come winging back here laden with silver bricks before any of that bunch can get anywhere. No one will think of looking here for the loot. We'll take what silver we can in the airplane, and the boys can cache the rest till the excitement has died down. Simms will be sound asleep in his bed at Upper Farm by the time the authorities get round to him. He can ship us a silver brick in a tub of butter at his discretion. I tell you, it's a cinch!" Ranlett exulted, with a sound midway between a chuckle and a groan.

With a crash, as if some mighty giant in a passion of rage had knocked the rocky crowns of the mountains together, the storm spent itself. In an incredibly short time the moon began to peer from between scudding clouds.

Benson crept slowly around the shack, his mind seething with anger and resentment. Both ranches cut off! Where was Mrs. Steve?

Moving when the moon was obscured, burrowing in the soaked tumbleweed when it emerged from hiding, Benson made his way slowly and with infinite caution to the airplane. He crept around it till the machine, which looked like nothing so much as a huge bird of prey, was between him and the shack.

He looked up at it. Suppose there were

some one in it! For an instant his heart obstructed his breathing. He must know.

He scratched one wing with his flashlight. To his taut nerves it seemed as if the sound reverberated among the foothills. Surely a person on guard would respond to that!

Reassured by the silence within the machine, Benson groped along the side of the plane until he located the pilot's seat. He climbed in. Silently, expeditiously, he did a few things to the steering-gear and wrecked the throttle.

"You won't transport many silver bricks in this, young feller!" he muttered grimly.

Knowledge of any kind was a valuable commodity to have packed in one's kit-bag, he thought, as he cautiously climbed down from the machine. Thanks to a few months spent at an aviation field in the spring of 1917, he had known where and how to administer body blows.

By a circuitous route he reached the shack. With jaws set hard to keep his lips from twitching with nervousness, he peered through one of the dirty windows. The light inside came from a candle stuck in a bottle which stood on the range opposite the door. Its weird, wavering light threw ghostly shadows on the walls.

Some one was stretched out on the bunk. A man with an aviator's helmet pushed back on his head sat on the range, another sprawled on the floor. It was Ranlett on the bunk, for Benson recognized his voice as he replied to a question.

"Ten o'clock! Better begin to watch out for the rockets soon. Remember, two green lights, if they have pulled it off and want us to wait; two red lights, if we are to beat it. Help me up. I'll get into the plane, and then we won't waste time making our getaway when they come."

Benson stood rigid. Should he let them get out of the shack, or should he cover them where they were? If they reached the airplane, they would immediately discover the damage and be on their guard. He must keep them in the shack.

Before the two airmen could help Ranlett to his feet, he fired a bullet through the window. It lodged in the wood over the bunk.

"Stay where you are! Hands up!" he shouted in a gruff voice, which excitement hoarsened. "We have you covered from each window! The man who moves gets his, good and plenty! Gerrish, you cover

the chap with the helmet. O'Neil, make a target of Marks, and I'll devote my entire attention to the Skunk!"

Would his bluff work, Tommy wondered frantically? It did. With muttered imprecations the two men ranged themselves against the wall, their hands above their heads. Ranlett sank back on the bunk. They weren't taking chances.

What should he do next, Benson wondered? He felt a nervous desire to shout with laughter. He had placed himself so that he could see, without moving, any signal which might come from the direction of Devil's Hold-Up. At imminent danger of becoming cross-eyed for life, he kept one eye on the men and one on the sky above the region where he knew the railroad to lie.

At signs of restlessness in his prisoners he stole to the other window, and fired a shot which had a miraculous effect upon their sagging muscles. They stiffened. Benson with difficulty repressed a chuckle. He had them dancing to the tune he piped, all right!

But what should he do if the bandits successfully pulled off their raid on the treasure-car? If he stayed where he was, he would be one against a dozen or more desperate men. If he made a break for safety, Ranlett and his choice aggregation of bad men would escape with their plunder. If—

What was that? A green light! Then Mrs. Steve had not reached Greyson. Another emerald star shot into the sky.

"Two green lights if they have pulled it off and want us to wait!"

That was what Ranlett had said. Some fugitive lines flicked tantalizingly on the screen of Tommy's memory, then steadied:

But to every man there openeth  
A high way and a low;  
And every man decideth  
The way his soul shall go.

That settled it. He would hold his prisoners and take his chance.

## XX

SHE had been right in her suspicions of the man of mystery, Jerry thought, as she put spurs to her horse. The words Beechy had called after her echoed in her mind:

"Tell Greyson, if he gets a chance—to put a bullet through the man—Ranlett took on—in my place. I mean that range-rider at Bear—Creek Ranch!"

It was growing dark. Heavy clouds had rolled up. She had some difficulty in forcing Patches from the old pack-trail which eventually led to home and supper. She cut across fields, splashed through the stream, then headed for the X Y Z ranch-house, whose lights seemed like will-o'-the-wisps. The longer she rode the more they receded.

She determined not to worry about Beechy. He had promised that he would try to get to the Double O, and she knew that he would win out. The unexpected would happen to help him, as it did nine out of ten times when one was in dire straits. With the thought came a vision of her father. She could see his massive head and shrewd eyes, could hear his deep voice saying:

"I have a firm conviction that a person can accomplish any worthy thing on which he is determined. How else do you account for the seeming miracles of heroism men achieved in the war? The test is, how much do you want it? I've gone on that principle all my life, and it's worked, I tell you, it's worked!"

It was curious how that memory of her father vitalized her. Jerry straightened in the saddle. She felt as if she had been warmed and fed, had had the elixir of courage poured through her veins. Beechy would come through. All she need think of was her part.

It was quite dark when she reached the X Y Z. The air stirred in hot gusts, from far off came the rumble of thunder. Patches was matted with sweat and dust.

Ito, the Japanese, opened the door in response to her knock. From behind him came the sound of voices, the tinkle of silver, the ripple of a woman's laugh.

Felice Denbigh! Jerry had forgotten her. For an instant she visualized the gold hair, the green eyes with their tigerish spots, the alluring chiffoned daintiness of the woman. With a shrug she looked down at her own dusty riding clothes. She did not care to meet the exquisite Mrs. Denbigh just now. Felice must not know that she had come. Jerry had an intuition that she would stop at nothing to humiliate the girl whom Steve had married.

She caught the astonished Ito by the lapels of his coat and drew him into the shadow.

"It is Mrs. Courtlandt, Ito. I must see Mr. Greyson. Don't tell him who it is,

though. Say—say that—that the ranch boss wants to see him."

The Jap's yellow mask of a face did not for a moment lose its imperturbability.

"All lie will I tell him, honorable lady. Keep in dark when I door make open."

Jerry sank to a bench among the vines, weary Patches sagged in the shadows. For an instant it seemed as if life drained out of her, as if she were being swept along the tide of indifference to unconsciousness. For the first time she realized that she had had but two hours' sleep in almost forty-eight hours.

She forced herself erect. She pulled off her hat, which she had crushed down over her forehead when she started on her wild ride to the X Y Z. It was a relief to get it off. She could think better. She dropped it to the bench beside her. A ray of light from somewhere set the gold in the cord glinting.

Where was the owner of that hat, she wondered? Had Steve gone into the mountains? Would Tommy and Peg be anxious when she did not appear for dinner? She did not dare telephone them, for fear that in some way Ranlett might get a clue to her errand.

She started forward as the door opened and closed and Greyson's voice demanded sharply:

"What's to pay, McGregor?"

"It isn't McGregor—it's Jerry Courtlandt," the girl whispered. "Sh-h! Take me somewhere where we can talk and not be overheard."

Greyson led her to a clump of trees near the entrance to the drive. Her horse followed her with his head close to the girl's shoulder. The branches swayed in the wind. Even in the dusk she could see the eddies of dust in the road. The atmosphere seemed electrically alive. Jerry shivered and seized a fold of Greyson's sleeve.

"I—I just want to make sure you're really here. It's so—so dark I can hardly see you," she apologized shakily.

His hand closed over hers, and his voice was tense as he demanded:

"What has happened, Jerry? What has brought you to me like this?"

For the first time she was conscious of the absurdity of her costume, of her delicate, torn blouse with its bandanna addition, of her linen breeches and riding boots. She drove away the thought of her appearance and plunged into explanation.

"Are you sure?" Greyson questioned, when she had finished. "How did Beechy know?"

Jerry's eyes widened.

"I never thought to ask," she confessed.

"I just believed what he told me, and I know—I know that he was telling the truth! What shall we do? We must hurry—hurry!"

For what seemed an eternity of time Bruce Greyson was silent. The wind rose and whistled and whined. Jerry was quivering with impatience when he spoke.

"The train must be flagged before it reaches the X Y Z. I'll run the flivver to the crossing and try to get down the track. It's a mad scheme, but it's the only chance. We couldn't get to the station at Slippery Bend in time if we tried. I'll take one of the men to wave a lantern—"

"You'll take me!" interrupted Jerry breathlessly. The amazing audacity of the plan thrilled her. "We mustn't take a chance with a third party. Beechy warned me that Ranlett had sympathizers everywhere. We can't trust one of the men."

"But there is a tremendous storm rising. What if Steve—"

"Steve may not be at home to-night, and what he doesn't know won't trouble him. Tommy and Peg will have to worry. Individuals must be sacrificed to the good of the community." Her spirits were mounting now that she had secured an ally. "Felice must not know that I am here."

"I'll have to make my apologies to Mrs. Denbigh. He can tell her that I have been called away suddenly. Slip down to the front gate and wait for me. I'll take your horse to the corral. If the men notice him at all, they will think that you have taken refuge here from the storm."

Crouched against the shrubs near the gate, the girl waited. A lurid flash in the heavens gave an instant's glimpse of the ranch-house, of the white fences of the corral. Then came the crash of thunder and utter darkness. There was a sound as of a fusillade of bullets on the hard road.

"Here's the rain!" Jerry murmured.

The words were drowned in a sudden hissing downpour. She peered at the illuminated dial of her watch. Nine o'clock! In just one hour the train was due at Devil's Hold-Up. Could they stop it?

She listened. Was that the sound of wheels? Yes—Greyson was coasting the machine down the slight incline toward her.



While it was still in motion, she sprang to the running-board, took her seat, and closed the door softly. Not a moment had been lost.

For the first time she felt the rain beating on her bare head. It stung her shoulders through her thin blouse. The top of the car had been thrown back. She put her hand up. Her hat—where was it? Then she remembered that she had flung it on the bench beside Greyson's front door.

"Being hatless is the least of my troubles," she thought buoyantly, as she peered forward into the darkness.

At the foot of the incline Greyson bent to the gears.

"Now we're off!" he whispered. "There is a lantern at your feet. Light it."

On her knees in the bottom of the car, Jerry struggled with the lantern. The flivver bounced and swerved as the driver tried to force the engine to a speed beyond its power. After using a profusion of matches, and a few anathemas when she burned her fingers, Jerry lighted the lantern. She gave a long sigh of relief as she slipped back into her seat.

"It's did! The bottom of the car looks as if there had been a massacre of matches, just as the floor around Steve's chair looks when he is smoking his pipe; but what are a few matches at a time like this? What can I do next?"

"Jerry, you amazing girl! Nothing—nothing seems hard or impossible when you have a share in it," Greyson burst out impetuously. He steadied his voice and directed: "When we come to the gate, get out and open it. I'll run through to the crossing. Be sure that you fasten the gate securely behind you. No sane person will think of our getting down the track this way. No sane person would think of attempting it," he added under his breath.

Once through the gate, Greyson cautiously steered the car off the crossing onto the track which paralleled that on which the west-bound train would come. He manipulated the motor until the left-hand wheels of the car hugged the inside of one rail and the right-hand wheels were in the road-bed.

He waited for flashes of lightning to show him the way. They came almost incessantly. The thunder crashed and rumbled as if the gods of the mountains were playfully pitching huge shells for exercise.

"This is going to be one little stunt,"

the man confided to the girl, as she took her seat beside him. "Keep the lantern in your hand. When I say 'Ready,' stand up in the seat and wave like mad. Now we're off, and may the gods be good to us!"

It wasn't a heathen god whom Jerry Courtlandt importuned. She never looked back upon that wild ride without a renewed thanksgiving that the prayer in her heart had been answered, without a reminiscent ache in every bone of her body, without seeing a close-up of Greyson, tense-jawed and wrinkle-browed, bent over the wheel.

He drove with his eyes intent on the tracks, which seemed like glistening streaks of fire when the lightning flashed. The swift transitions from dazzling light to inky darkness blinded Jerry. It would always remain a miracle to the girl that the flivver did not capsize. She felt no fear at the time. Only when from behind them came the sound as of a hundred furies let loose did she shudder.

"Is—is that a pack of wolves?" she whispered hoarsely.

"Coyotes. Two can make as much noise as a dozen of anything else. Hear that? Begin to wave! Ready!"

Jerry scrambled to the seat. She lost her balance as the car careened tipsily. She clutched Greyson's hair with a violence which wrung a stifled "Ouch!" from the victim.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't trained as a bare-back rider," the girl apologized with a hysterical ripple of laughter.

"Wave! Wave!" Greyson shouted above the din of the storm.

The girl waved her lantern in curving sweeps. At first she could hear nothing, see nothing; then above the noise of their own wheels she heard a rumble which quickly increased to a roar. Then came a light, and behind it a creature which might have belonged to some prehistoric order of megalosaurians, so long was it, so sinuous, so sinister. It was the train!

Jerry waved frantically. Surely, surely the engineer must see her light! She caught her breath and held it as the roar grew deafening and the monster came leaping, writhing, pounding on.

"They see us! They see us!" she shouted, and laughed exultantly, all the while waving the lantern madly.

The whistle of the oncoming engine blew a frenzied warning. Greyson turned his wheel sharply over. The flivver literally

jumped the rails and ran along a siding which joined the main track. The girl sank into her seat, limp with exhaustion.

With groaning and grinding of brakes and clanking of wheels the long train trembled to a stop. Which one of the cars carried the treasure, Jerry wondered?

"For the love of Mike!" a rough Irish voice thundered in her ear. "What we got here? Escaped lunatics, I guess!"

The light of a lantern was flashed in the faces of the occupants of the car. The man who held it swore with an ease and facility which took Jerry's breath.

"It's a man and a woman, crazy as coots!" he called to some one behind him. Then, in a magisterial tone: "It's good we got the new division superintendent aboard this trip, and he can see for himself what held us up. He'd never believe it if I told him. Now why'd you flag this train?"

A group of men had already gathered around them. Greyson stepped from the flivver and drew Jerry after him. What would he say, she wondered anxiously? Their errand must not be suspected. They must get aboard the train and interview the division superintendent.

A sudden mad thought suggested itself. Without an instant's hesitation Jerry slipped her arm under Greyson's, rested her head against his sleeve, and smiled audaciously into the broad, weather-beaten face glowering at her.

"Don't scold, Mr. Brakeman. It was reckless, but—but—you see, we just had to flag this train. We—we want to get to the coast. We're—we're eloping!"

"Good God!"

Greyson's protest was submerged in the hoarse ejaculation. Jerry wheeled. Behind her stood Stephen Courtlandt.

## XXI

IT seemed to Steve, as he looked at the girl, with her hair, which wind and rain had lashed into clinging tendrils of glinting bronze, pressed close against Greyson's arm, that his universe tore itself from its orbit and hurtled into fathomless space. For thirty throbbing seconds the blue eyes challenged the brown; then he turned away.

"Courtlandt!" called Greyson.

Steve was speaking to the division superintendent, who, white with anxiety, had hurried up.

"Sure they'll have to go along with us, Steve," reassured the autocrat of the train.

He turned to Greyson. "We'll take you to the coast, all right, but you won't get off the train till you've paid a good fat fine for stopping it! You and the lady get aboard, *pronto!* Steve, lock her up in one of the compartments. I'll look after the man. Mac, if anything else tries to hold us up, you shoot, and shoot quick, no matter if there are skirts mixed up in it!"

He rushed off in company with the burly brakeman. Greyson caught Courtlandt's arm.

"Look here, Steve, you must listen. Jerry—"

"You needn't apologize for my—my wife, Greyson. She's coming with me."

He put his hands none too gently on the girl's shoulder.

"But, Steve, you don't understand," Jerry protested. "I—"

"All aboard there!" yelled the brakeman angrily.

Steve fairly lifted the girl to the platform of the Pullman. He compelled her along the corridor to a compartment.

"Come in here, Jerry; and no matter what you hear don't come out. I'll send the maid to help you dry your clothing."

He turned to go, but she laid her hand on his arm.

"Steve, you must listen to me. I want to tell you—"

"What can you tell me, except that you love Greyson and ran away with him? I can't hear that now—I won't! You're mine, and I keep what is my own. And remember this—if you try to communicate with him while you are on this train—I'll shoot him!"

His eyes were black; there was a white line about his nostrils.

"Steve, you're all wrong! If you won't trust me—" She shrugged the remainder of the sentence. Then her voice was pleading. "Did Bruce—Mr. Greyson—get a chance to speak to the division superintendent?"

"Did he? I'll say he did. What Nelson isn't saying to your—your gallant friend at this minute, isn't worth saying!"

He looked at her suspiciously as she laughed. He took a step nearer.

"No, I sha'n't have hysterics, Steve. Now that I know that my gallant friend, as you call him, is explaining our scheme to the division superintendent, I haven't a care in the world. In fact"—with a dainty, politely repressed yawn—"if I

could have this place and the maid to myself, I might take a nap. I shall have plenty of time. It's a long way to the coast"—with another irrepressible ripple of laughter. Then, as he lingered: "You needn't stand guard. I sha'n't run away again. An encore lacks the snap of a first performance," she finished audaciously.

Courtlandt opened his lips to reply, thought better of it, closed the door smartly behind him, and went in search of the maid. Back in the compartment which the division superintendent used as an office, he lighted his pipe and paced the floor back and forth, back and forth, as he tried to marshal order from the chaos of his thoughts.

Why didn't the fool train start, he wondered, as he listened to what seemed an endless amount of backing and starting and grinding of brakes?

His mind went back to the moment in Lower Field when Johnny Simms had handed him a letter and bolted. He could see every word on the tear-blotted page:

Ranlett doesn't want the cattle. He cut the fences so that the Double O outfit would follow the shorthorns into the mountains. He and his bunch are figuring to rob the westbound to-night at Devil's Hold-Up. Government silver. Watch out! Ranlett has spies everywhere.

There had been no signature, no mention of Simms, but Courtlandt felt sure that he was in on the deal, and that the wife was trying to keep her husband from being caught in what might easily prove to be more than robbery. His first reaction from the message had been amused incredulity. It was absurd to believe that in these enlightened days a man of Ranlett's intelligence—and he was infernally intelligent—would try to get away with such a mid-eighties stunt.

The sense of amusement had been succeeded by startled conviction. The fact was that Ranlett did think he could put it across, and was to make the attempt that very night. Steve must hustle through his work and make Slippery Bend in time to board the train. He could neither wire nor phone, if it were true that Ranlett had spies everywhere. He must keep his own counsel until he could talk with the men in charge of the train.

After that he had followed trails and conferred with ranch section heads. As clouds began to spread out from the southwest, he galloped into Slippery Bend. He

had supper in a leisurely fashion at the one hotel, dropped into the post-office for a chat with Sandy, who was sorting his mail for the morrow's trip, and discussed crops and stock and tractors with the group of men gathered there. He had reached the railroad-station about ten minutes before the treasure train was due.

Steve hailed the agent.

"West-bound on time? I'm going up the line to follow some steers that have mysteriously wandered off. I'm not looking for trouble, but—"

He tapped the holster which hung from his belt. Baldy Jennings, whose head resembled a shiny white island entirely surrounded by a fringe of red hair, chewed and spat with intriguing accuracy as he listened. Steve's explanation had precipitated a flow of observation.

"Shucks! The world's sick. Most of it don't want to work, and them that does ain't let work by them that don't. The majority seem to figure that it's a darned sight easier to pick the other man's pocket than to fill their own by honest labor. Sure, it warn't none of my butt-in, but I used to tell old man Fairfax that Ranlett was narrer between the horns. Oh, you don't hev to mention no names—I know who took them steers. Well, I got to get busy. The railroad don't pay me sixty bucks per fer swappin' talk, even with the owner of the Double O. Here comes the west-bound!"

A shrill whistle echoed back and forth among the hills like a shuttlecock, and the vibration of the rails announced the coming train.

Courtlandt stopped his restless pacing as he visualized the first person who had stepped from the train. It was Nelson, who had been a captain in the battalion in which Steve had served overseas.

Nelson's face, which had been white and tense when he reached the platform, had colored as he recognized Courtlandt.

"Well, if it isn't the whistling lieutenant!" he cried eagerly. "What are you doing in this teeming mart of trade?" he added, as he glanced at Baldy Jennings, staring open-mouthed at the meeting, and beyond him to a few coatless, vested, bearded natives who leaned against the sagging building.

Courtlandt laughed. When the fog of surprise lifted, he could see that the years had not changed Nelson. The captain's black eyes were as keen as ever, his little

mustache had the same moth-eaten effect, the network of veins on his slightly bulbous nose was a little redder, and he was in civilian clothes. That realization wrinkled Steve's brow in perplexity.

"What are *you* doing here? Last I heard you had joined the regular army and were stationed near Philadelphia."

Perception of the situation came in a blinding flash. Nelson's eyes met Steve's steadily.

"There are some occasions when a soldier appears in multi—as, for instance, when he is passing as the newly appointed division superintendent of a railroad."

Steve drew a breath. So that was it!

His eyes traveled over the train. Which was the treasure car? Obviously the one in the middle, which looked like an ordinary baggage-car. The rest were brilliantly lighted coaches, from the windows of which eyes peered out curiously, indifferently, or interestedly, as the temperaments and minds behind them dictated.

His glance came back to Nelson.

"You're the very man I'm looking for. I've lost some cattle, and I'm going up the line to look for them. I *must give you all particulars*. I'm counting on you to help me if there should happen to be any rough stuff pulled off. It's a very important matter."

The two men had stood apart from the confusion of the station. The rain still beat down. Over among the mountains thunder and lightning held high carnival.

Courtlandt drew Nelson into the lee of the building. He struck a match and held it above his pipe till the wood burned down to his fingers. In the flickering light the two men had regarded each other steadily. Nelson moistened his lips.

"Sure! I see, Steve. Glad to have you along." He raised his voice as one of the train-hands approached. "Make yourself comfortable in my quarters. Perhaps I can find a couple of fellows to make up a little game."

Courtlandt was quite unconscious of the rumble of the train as he waited for his friend to join him in the double compartment which had been fitted up as an office for the captain. Minutes seemed hours.

When Nelson did come, the smile had left his lips, his eyes were stern. He closed the door with a bang.

"Deal out what's coming, quick!" he commanded.

Steve told him, almost word for word, what Mrs. Simms had written.

"You're sure of this?"

"I've given the message as it came to me. The person who sent the warning had every reason to keep mum."

"I get you!" Nelson pulled down a map that was rolled against the side of the car. He studied the maze of lines and dots and dashes. "Going along with us?" he asked casually.

"Surest thing you know!"

Steve felt absurdly light-hearted. Nelson looked so thoroughly equal to his job.

"Then you'd better—now what the devil is *that*?" he growled, as the engine blew a furious warning and the brakes ground on with a suddenness which threw both men against the desk. "We can't have reached Devil's Hold-Up yet."

And Courtlandt heard a girl's voice say:

"Don't scold, Mr. Brakeman! It was reckless, but—but—you see, we just had to flag this train. We—we want to go to the coast. We're—we're eloping!"

Jerry and Greyson! And he would have staked his life that she was true blue, that even if she felt that she could never love the man she had married she would have trampled on temptation.

The intolerable ache in Steve's heart maddened him. She should not carry out this mad plan! He wouldn't let her go, even if she hated him eternally. He would make her love him—love him as he had loved her from the moment he had looked up to see her enter the living-room of Glamorgan's apartment.

He had been so infernally proud that he had crucified himself by pretending indifference, and now he had been brutal. He should have let her explain—he would go now and listen to what she had to say. God help him to act the man, no matter what it was! He would be tender, he would be sympathetic, but he would never give her up!

Nelson entered the room and closed the door softly behind him. His face was white, there were tiny flecks of foam on his lips, and his eyes blazed.

"In five minutes we'll slow down to go through Devil's Hold-Up. The bandits counted on that. I'm going forward into the caboose. In a few minutes trail along after me. Leave your holster here. The passengers mustn't get the idea that we're packing guns. Get me?"



"I get you," replied Steve. "Where is—the man who flagged the train?"

"In the car behind, locked into a compartment with an armed guard before it. He wanted to talk, but I wasn't taking chances with any middle-aged *Lochinvar* until after we'd passed the Hold-Up. Got the woman locked up, haven't you?"

"Yes, she—"

Courtlandt cut off the explanation he was about to offer. Why enlighten Nelson? If he could keep Jerry's name out of the affair, so much the better. Greyson wouldn't be likely to talk.

"All right! See that she doesn't break loose. A girl who would flivver along a railroad-track would have to be roped and tied to keep her out of a wild party like this, or I miss my guess!"

Steve looked unseeingly at the door as it closed behind Nelson. He was right—it would be like Jerry to get into the mix-up. He would stop at her compartment as he went forward, and make sure that she was there.

He unfastened the holster from his belt and flung it upon the desk. With a slight bulge in the region of the hip pocket of his riding-breeches, he left the office. At the door of the compartment in which he had left Jerry he knocked.

There was no answer. He tapped again and listened. There was no sound inside save the creaking of woodwork and springs as the car swayed. Courtlandt whitened. Could she have left her room?

With quick impatience he opened the door and stepped inside. In his surprise he slammed it behind him. Jerry, rolled in a blanket, lay in the bunk, asleep.

Even the noise he had made did not rouse her. Evidently the maid had taken her clothing to dry it, for she was shrouded like a mummy from her feet to her chin.

Courtlandt crossed the narrow space between them and looked down upon her. Her wet hair was spread over the pillow to dry, and a bare foot hung over the edge of the bunk. Her dark lashes lay like fringes. The one cheek visible had a long red scratch. Her sleep was so profound that she barely breathed.

Why was she so exhausted, Steve wondered anxiously? In a flash he remembered. She had been up all the night before with Mrs. Carey. Was it only last night that he had taken her to Bear Creek Ranch? It seemed weeks ago. No wonder

that she was tired, for she couldn't have had much sleep in the last forty-eight hours.

What did the bruise mean? He leaned over her and touched it lightly. It was not a recent scratch.

Very gently he raised the pink foot, which swayed with every motion of the car, and covered it with the blanket. He looked down upon the girl for a moment. With his jaw set and the veins in his temples standing out like cords, he went out and closed the door behind him.

Courtlandt's eyes were strained, and there was a white line about his lips as he entered the caboose. Through the windows he could see that the storm had rolled eastward. Overhead the moon played at hide and seek with fleecy remnants of cloud. Stars appeared dimly, reconnoitered for a moment, then shone with steady brilliancy.

Nelson, seated on a tool-box, rolled a cigaret with slightly unsteady fingers. The engineer had his head out of the window; his assistant was tinkering a bit of balky machinery. The captain looked up as Courtlandt appeared.

"Did you come out to see the wheels go round, Steve? I'd rather ride here than anywhere else, myself. What's to pay now, Hawks?" he asked, as the engineer ground on the brakes.

"Boulder on the track!" rumbled the sooty man.

The engineer turned white under the soot as his eyes crossed in a futile endeavor to look along the shiny blue nose of an automatic in the hand of his grimy assistant.

"Hands up, all of you!" cried the traitor. "Come over here, Hawks! You gentlemen can talk to me while my friends give the train the once over!"

"Well, I'll be—" the engineer began.

"You sure will be if you talk!" growled the man with the gun.

Courtlandt and Nelson, who had been caught completely off guard by this attack from within, stood with upraised arms.

"Now, what the hell?" snarled the treacherous fireman.

His gun swayed for the fraction of a second as a figure fell into the caboose from the tender. Courtlandt seized the opportunity. By the aboriginal expedient of kicking his victim smartly in the shin, he surprised the grimy one into a howl of pain. Instinctively he lowered one hand to the aching member, and Steve instantly seized the revolver.

"You're some gunman!" he jeered. "Go back into that corner and sit down!"

Shorn of his weapon, and of most of his bravado, the traitor obeyed.

"Hawks," Steve went on, "tie his feet and hands. Here's his gun. Nelson, if you want to give orders elsewhere, I can manage. Now what have we here?"

The man who had fallen from the tender had struggled to his feet. He braced himself against the side of the caboose. His hair was matted down over his eyes, his khaki shirt was in strips, his breeches and riding-boots were caked with mud. Evidently he had been a rider before he turned bandit, Courtlandt thought, as he covered him with his revolver. Hawks was standing guard with his prisoner's own automatic. Fate has a keen sense of comedy.

"What's your business?" Steve demanded sharply.

The man made an evident effort to rally his senses. His voice was low and broken as he answered:

"There are twenty men in the gap—waiting for this train—the silver—bricks. Here—here are the names."

He fumbled in his shirt. Steve watched him with wary eyes, his finger on the trigger of his gun. The trussed man in the corner swore volubly. The engineer silenced him with the toe of his boot.

Courtlandt took a step nearer the gasping, groping man. The light was dim. If he was playing a trick—but he wasn't. With painful effort he produced a paper. His right arm hung helpless. A red spot appeared on the breast of his shirt.

"Her it is. I—I played into Ranlett's hands with the steers—Steve!" he finished, and collapsed in a heap on the floor.

"Steve!"

Courtlandt was on his knees beside the fallen man, echoing his own name. He slipped his arm under the bent head. The man looked up with a laugh that died in a painful rattle in his throat.

"You didn't know me, Steve?"

"Denbigh!"

"Don't take it so hard. This—this scratch isn't anything. I—I swore I'd square myself with the world and—and my conscience. I've been playing my cards for this grand slam for weeks. Somehow Ranlett got wind that the silver—was to—be snipped some time this month. When I found that Beechy was your man, I

dropped him a hint as to the ownership of the treasure. Then I took care of him for Ranlett—see? You'll find him stunned, but unhurt, in the shack in Buzzard's Hollow. No—don't interrupt—let me talk while I can—they'll be here in a minute. To-night they must have been watching me. When I tried to slip away, Simms fired. I—I rolled over the cliff—they must have thought that finished me. It did—almost—but I was determined to get here. Keep those names—I—hope—I've saved the government's money!"

His head fell back on Courtlandt's shoulder, and his eyes closed for a moment. Then with an effort he rallied.

"I can't drift off yet. Two green rockets—in my shirt. As—soon as you've caught the gang—send those up. They'll keep Ranlett and—and the others in Buzzard's Hollow till—you get there. They mean that—that—"

Courtlandt had to put his ear close to Denbigh's lips to hear the last words. He laid him down and reached into his shirt for the rockets. Nelson appeared.

"Leave him, Steve. I need you. I've sent a gang out to move the boulder. We'll let the bad men think they've fooled us. Half the passengers on this train are regulars in mufti. Uncle Sam isn't taking chances when he ships a car-load of silver bricks! Here they come—look!" he concluded in a hoarse, excited whisper.

Out from between crevices and behind cottonwoods stole sinister shadows. The men trying to remove the boulder from the track worked steadily. The night was so still after the storm that Steve could hear their hard breathing, their gruff commands, and the clink of metal against rock as they attacked the obstruction. The man in the corner opened his lips to shout a warning, but Hawks stuffed his mouth full of oily waste before he could utter a sound. Nelson oozed delighted anticipation.

"Good Lord, man!" Steve exploded. "You haven't crossed the bridge yet. Those men are after the government's money, and they're going to put up a stiff fight for it!"

"So they are, so they are, Steve; but they won't get it! We dropped off the treasure-car—the last lighted Pullman, with the silver bricks in it—on the siding where those crazy elopers flagged us. Your Uncle Dudley wasn't taking any chances!"

*(To be concluded in the April number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

# The Smudge of Guilt

HOW ANTHONY TUKE, DETECTIVE, HANDLED THE PROBLEM  
OF THE MORTZ PEARLS

By Edward Woodward

WHILE running a speculative eye over the *Financial Times*, and enjoying the first full bite of an after-breakfast pipe, Anthony Tuke was disturbed by his man, Arnott.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," Arnott announced, extending a card on a salver. "I said it was a trifle early for you to see any one, sir; but he was exceptionally insistent."

Tuke looked up with a smile, and examined the card.

"Jarvis P. Mortz, the Grange, Whipstead, Surrey," he read. "Show him in, Arnott," he ordered.

Rising to his feet and stretching his six foot four of bone and sinew, he waited with his back to the fire for his early visitor to enter.

Most people took Tuke for a lethargic guardsman. He was invariably groomed and dressed with immaculate and meticulous care; his manner and personality were entirely correct, and his habits and tastes were those of a man of leisure and unlimited means. He had sojourned much in the East, and his face had the impassivity that so often marks the oriental type. Beneath his placid outward seeming, he was the keenest criminologist in Europe.

Paris knew him; Berlin disliked him; and because his specialty was the confusion of jewel thieves, the fraternity of gem-dealers, from Hatton Garden to Amsterdam, spoke his name with an almost servile reverence.

Jarvis P. Mortz entered the room with a flourish and consequential step. He was a rotund man of about fifty, with a pale, dewlapped face and aggressive eyes. One knew at a glance that he had made money—piles of money—and had made it off his own bat.

He looked at Tuke with a quick flip of the eyelids which gave nothing away. Then his thin lips seemed to click open, and two words shot out:

"Mr. Tuke?"

Tuke had met men of that type before; they both interested and amused him. He gazed at his visitor with slumber-lidded eyes.

"Right on the mark!" he replied with a congratulatory smile. "What can I do for you, Mr. Mortz?"

Mortz came nearer, laid his soft hat on the table, unbuttoned his heavy motor-coat, protruded his stomach, and stuck his hands into his side pockets.

"I'm told you're a bird of mighty bright plumage where the tracing of missing jewels is the business in hand," he said. "Is that right?"

He clipped the words out like a man eating crisp toast, and the smile on Tuke's lips broadened as he replied:

"Paroquet or peacock, Mr. Mortz?" he asked.

Mortz grinned.

"Golden eagle, I should say," he snapped back, "if what I hear about your fees is right. I've come to you, instead of Scotland Yard, because I want to avoid scandal and gossip."

Tuke pulled a chair forward.

"Take a pew," he invited, "and relieve your mind of the main points of your trouble. You'll find these Coronas in quite passable condition."

There was a look of amused surprise on Mortz's face as he took the seat and the cigar.

"You don't strike me as an ordinary sleuth," he remarked between puffs, as he lit the weed. "Where's the shag? And how about the dressing-gown and fiddle?"

There's nothing of the fly cop about you, either. You're something new!"

Tuke was examining the end of his cigar while Mortz spoke. Now, satisfied that it was evenly alight, he flung the match away and glanced at his visitor.

"What's your trouble, Mr. Mortz?" he asked crisply.

Mortz took the snub with a smile, and a pull at his cigar with appreciation.

"Pearls!" he replied. "One of the finest collections in the world—and they've gone!"

"Can you tell me how?" asked Tuke.

"That's what I'm here to do," returned Mortz. "If you can help me to get 'em back, and lay hands on the crook who snaffled them, I'll pay you any fee you like to name."

"Where did you get them from originally?" asked Tuke, after a second's pause.

"All over the place," said Mortz, with a wide wave of his hand; "north, south, east, and west. I paid any price asked for the stone I wanted. Six weeks ago I sent them away to be graded and strung into a couple of ropes. They are worth about two hundred thousand pounds, and were to be a present to my girl, Joyce, on the occasion of her marriage with Sir Stephen Maitland, in a fortnight's time."

A gleam of enlightenment slipped into Tuke's eyes.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "I remember now. I was trying to recall where, and in what connection, I had seen the name of Mortz in the press lately. It was the announcement of the engagement in the *Post*."

Mortz chuckled.

"That's it," he said; "but you don't need to go to the society chit-chat to see the name of Mortz in print. 'Mortz's Pickled Onions for Pampered Palates,' 'Mortz's Mango Chutney for the Million,' 'Mortz's Silky Sauce for Sickly Feeders,'—that's me! I—"

"To be sure!" interrupted Tuke, somewhat overcome. "But the news of your daughter's engagement to such a—a—well-known man as Sir Stephen Maitland aroused my interest."

A sly expression came into Mortz's eyes.

"Yes, yes—I know what you mean. I know Maitland has been through the bankruptcy court, and I know he's a bit of a sport; but it's a good match for all that." An oily pride stole into the pickle king's tone. "I don't mind admitting I'm pleased

about it. My girl has the locks, and I've got the dollars; and the handle to Maitland's name makes up for his financial shortcomings and gay disposition."

"I see!" said Tuke dryly. "But when were these pearls stolen, and from where?"

"From my study safe at the Grange," replied Mortz. "When, I can't tell you exactly. I had them back from the graders ten days ago. They were in a couple of levant morocco cases. Between then and now the safe has been opened by some one who'd got hold of the key, for the safe was undamaged; the real stones have been taken out and some cultured rubbish substituted. I discovered the theft yesterday."

For a space Tuke smoked in silence, Mortz watching him with narrowed, speculative eyes.

"Have you any suspicion as to the culprit?" he asked presently.

"Not much," replied Mortz. "Only three people, besides myself, knew of the pearls being in the safe; and I—"

"Who are those three?" cut in Tuke crisply.

"My daughter, her fiancé—he was staying at the Grange when the stones came back from the graders, and he saw me put them in the safe—and a fellow named Philip Watson, an old flame of Joyce's."

"Philip Watson, eh?" smiled Tuke. "Wasn't there a chance of a match between your daughter and him at one time? I seem to have heard something about it."

"Not a ghost of a chance!" ejaculated Mortz, with a truculent grunt. "Philip Watson isn't any sort of man for my money. He's too darned wild, for one thing, and too darned poor, for another. Those two qualities don't mix well in the husband of a rich man's daughter!"

"H-m!" Tuke thoughtfully blew smoke through his nostrils. "Watson is supposed to be something of a judge of jewels."

"Is he?" returned Mortz. "Well, he was sweet on my girl, and she's a bright enough jewel for any man; but I put my foot down. After I found them alone in my study with the safe open, and Joyce showing him the pearls—she'd got the key from my study—I showed him the way to the gate, and told him I'd loan him my car, if it would help him to get away any quicker. He's the only one of the three I suspect. Considering the circumstances, I don't want a noise made over the matter, if it can be done quietly."



Tuke nodded his head.

"Why do you suspect Watson of the theft?" he asked.

"I believe," replied Mortz, "that, finding he couldn't get my girl and her money, he pinched the pearls instead. I saw him hovering around one evening after I had turned him off."

"How do you suppose he got the key?" asked Tuke very calmly. "You and your daughter are apparently the only people having access to it."

An uncomfortable expression came into Mortz's face.

"Mr. Tuke," he said, "I've told you I want this thing done quietly, without scandal—do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied Tuke. "What is Miss Mortz's attitude toward the loss?"

"She's pretty calm," muttered Mortz. "Pretty darned calm! I had a scene with her after I turned young Watson out, but she sees the wisdom of her old dad's counsel now. So long as she is going to marry Maitland, there's nothing to be gained by keeping the other chap on the sideboard."

Tuke glanced down at his watch.

"Can I run out to Whipstead this afternoon?" he asked. "I should like to have a look at that safe, and at the room from which the stones were taken."

"Sure!" said Mortz, rising and buttoning his coat. "I'm returning at two o'clock, and I'll drive you down in my car."

"Right!" replied Tuke. "You'll find me ready."

## II

THERE were three points in the case which interested Tuke. One was the large amount involved; a second, the presence of the cultured stones; and a third, the fact that the safe had not been forced. The first gave the case importance, while the last two showed that the culprit, whoever he was, had laid his plans in a thoroughly scientific manner. It was evident, also, that he had possessed an accomplice, who had obtained possession of the safe key and replaced it after the robbery.

"I hope the old chap won't take it too much to heart," thought Tuke, as he spun down Piccadilly that afternoon in Mortz's car.

Whipstead Grange was a fine building, standing in many acres of park land. As the automobile threaded the avenue of

oaks, and pulled up at the hall door, Tuke noticed that the whole place was literally surrounded with ladders, on which men in paint-smearing coats were at work repainting the house.

"By Jove, you're making the place smart!" he remarked, turning to Mortz.

"Yes," replied the pickle prince. "I'm having it brightened up for the wedding, you know."

"Nothing like brightness!" said Tuke, as he stepped from the car and glanced at a man engaged in plastering the front door with vivid apple-green enamel.

The study was an imposing room, where the hand of Mortz was very evident. The whole atmosphere was heavy with luxury. It was the sanctum of a gross-minded sybarite, its coloring being of oriental richness.

The thick pile of the carpet struck Tuke as being positively degenerating in its yielding softness. Great saddle-bag chairs stood around the open hearth, and a huge black cat lay sprawled before the blazing fire. On the left, two great glass doors stood open to a conservatory, from which the heavy odor of hot-house plants flooded the room, mingling with the pungent smell of new paint. To the left again of these doors, let in flush with the wall, stood the massive door of a safe.

Tuke, cold from his drive in the chilly February air, walked up to the fireplace. He had withdrawn his gloves and stretched his hands to the blaze, when he became aware that one of the chairs was occupied. Then he turned with a start and met the dark eyes of Joyce Mortz.

He had never seen her before, but he instinctively knew who she was. As her father, hurrying forward, made the introduction, Tuke was struck with the discomfort and pain in the girl's startled glance.

She had risen to her feet. As her father spoke the detective's name, a sudden self-possession seemed to cloak her, and her red lips curled back in a smile of thinly veiled derision. Sensing her antagonism, Tuke met her smile with a twinkling eye. Was this the accomplice, he wondered?

"I hope we haven't shattered any pleasant dreams, Miss Mortz," he said.

"Not at all, Mr. Tuke," replied Joyce. "Any dreams I ever had have been shattered already. I'm afraid you are also doomed to disappointment, so far as the object of your call is concerned—or rather, I hope so!"

Tuke's eyebrows went up for a second. This was apparently an open declaration of war. He shot a glance of question at Mortz, and then looked down at the big black cat, which, disturbed by his presence on the hearth-rug, had risen, and was rubbing his thick coat against Tuke's legs.

"Now, Joyce, my dear," said Mortz in a flurried voice, "don't talk nonsense. Whoever helped himself to those pearls deserves punishment. Please leave Mr. Tuke and me alone to talk things over."

For a second the girl looked at her father in silence. Then, with a frigid nod to Tuke, she swept from the room.

Tuke watched her go. Without speaking, he turned and walked to the open conservatory doors. Experience had taught him to treat a woman like a Mills bomb with a rusty pin; and for a moment he stood in silent thought. Then, almost overcome by the odor of the newly dried white paint with which the interior woodwork of the conservatory had been coated, he turned to Mortz, who was watching him.

"Well, Mr. Tuke," said the owner of the house, "this is the room, and that"—pointing to the safe—"is where the pearls were taken from. There's not a mark on it, but the jewels have gone."

Tuke passed over to the safe and ran his hands over the door for a minute or two.

"Only Miss Mortz and yourself have access to this?" he asked presently.

"Only myself," corrected Mortz, with anger in his voice. "Joyce had no business with the key when she showed Watson the stones."

"Would you mind opening it?" asked Tuke quietly. "I should like to see the pearls which were substituted for the real ones."

Mortz crossed the room, took a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked the door, and, taking two morocco cases from an inner drawer, laid them on the table.

"Here they are," he said.

"One moment," murmured Tuke.

Bending down, he examined the inside of the safe. He went over it inch by inch with a small flash-lamp. Then he quartered the inside surface of the heavy door. Reaching the bottom edge, he paused, his nostrils quivering, his knife-edge brain probing forward.

For a moment there was silence. Then, suddenly, Tuke started up, for something soft and insinuating was pressing against

his legs. He glanced down without moving his head.

"Hello, puss!" he laughed. He turned to Mortz, who was still standing by the table, the jewel-cases in his hand. "Your cat gave me a scare," he said. "I wondered what the dickens was pressing against my legs."

Mortz nodded his head and chuckled.

"He's a funny animal," he said. "He has a strange fancy for that sort of thing. He doesn't like me, and never comes nearer than he can help; but he's always making friends with others." Mortz paused, still chuckling. "He once made Maitland spill a whisky and soda over his shirt-front. Nervous chap, Maitland!"

Without answering, Tuke glanced at the two large ropes of stones that Mortz was holding up.

"H-m!" he muttered. "Those are not even cultured stones—they are rubbishy imitations, and crude at that; but I'll take them away with me if I may. They may help me."

"Right you are," said Mortz, handing him the boxes and relocking the safe door.

"Found anything of a clue?"

"Nothing for publication," replied Tuke, picking up the cat and stroking its glossy coat.

Tuke's fingers were unusually magnetic. As he slipped his hand over the black fur, the uneasy feline suddenly stretched out and commenced purring. Coming to the tip of the animal's tail, Tuke's hand paused. Then, going to the conservatory door, he examined the fur closely.

"A wonderful coat!" he remarked, as he returned to the hearth and dropped the cat into one of the chairs.

"Yes, he's a fine cat," replied Mortz. "My girl usually brushes and combs him every day; but as you may have noticed, Joyce is put out about my treatment of Watson, and isn't taking much interest in her home just now."

Tuke kept silent for a moment, and then glanced at Mortz.

"I'm not in any way mad, Mortz," he said; "but I want you to keep the cat out of this room until you hear from me again. I want him kept in a room where no one else but you can get at him; and I want you on no account to have him either combed or brushed."

Mortz grinned.

"Anything you say goes," he replied.

"I was wondering when the mysterious stuff was coming along. Now you're starting, I suppose?"

"Yes," returned Tuke, "I'm starting; and I want your chauffeur to run me back to town again immediately."

### III

A LITTLE after seven o'clock that evening Tuke strolled into the Ajax Club. He had formed a rough working theory; but it was a sort of triangle with one of its sides missing. It was the search for this missing side that had brought him back to London so hastily, and that sent him to the lounge of the Ajax as soon as he could slip into his evening clothes.

The first man he saw there was the man he most wanted to talk to. Pip Watson was a likable sort of chap who had inherited the dual handicaps of an unholy passion for gambling and an income scarcely sufficient to meet his extravagant tastes. As a result, he was always in a state of desperate impecuniosity; but he had many more friends than enemies.

There was a heavy frown on his face as he greeted Tuke.

"Hello, Watson!" said Tuke. "Why the worried look? Have you backed another loser, or does a straight flush absolutely refuse to come into your hand?"

A thin smile came to Watson's lips.

"You're wrong, Tuke," he replied. "You're quite wrong. As a matter of fact, the thorn in my side at the moment is the man you were motoring with at two o'clock this afternoon."

Tuke lit a cigaret and dropped the dead match into a stand before replying. His brain was working rapidly, but his eyes were calm and indifferent.

"Oh!" he said after an instant's pause. "What has the pickle prince been doing to you?"

"Behaving like the beast he is!" snarled Watson. "What's your opinion of a man who, for the sake of his own vainglory, disregards his daughter's dearest wish and coerces her into a marriage with a titled blackguard whom she loathes?"

Tuke blew a long spiral of smoke from pursed lips before replying.

"I should show my opinion by punching his head, if I could," he replied softly, a suggestion of amusement dinting the corners of his mouth.

"Well, that is what Jarvis Mortz has

done!" exclaimed Watson tensely. "Joyce Mortz and I were as good as engaged when her father comes along and flings Maitland into the ring. He tells Joyce she's got to marry the title. He paints me as a spend-thrift and pauper, and forbids her to see me again!"

A grunt of amusement jerked from Tuke.

"What did you do?" he asked. "As you were told?"

"No, I didn't," returned Watson. "I ignored the old devil, and called on Joyce as often as usual. Even after her engagement to Maitland was announced we didn't let it make any difference. A week or so ago, the old man caught us together in his study. She was—"

Watson hesitated, and just for a second Tuke's eyes flickered.

"Well?" he asked. "What happened?"

"Oh, to cut a long story short," continued Watson, "he turned me out of the house, and said things no other man has ever said to me. By gad, he'll find out his mistake before long!"

Tuke flipped the ash from his cigaret and glanced down at it. He was wondering why Watson had shrunk from mentioning the pearls. Presently he looked up.

"Did you see anything of any pearls on that occasion?" he asked. "I heard that Mortz is giving his daughter a fortune in a couple of ropes."

Watson gave a short, sharp laugh.

"Lord, yes!" he exclaimed. "The old outsider is actually palming off a lot of imitation rubbish on his daughter as the real thing. He's told her they are worth two hundred thousand pounds. He means farthings!"

Tuke forced a laugh, but his eyes were deadly serious. If Watson's version of the matter was false, he was bluffing cleverly. If it was true, he had unconsciously cleared himself of all suspicion. Which?

It was during the ensuing pause that Bob Scudmore strolled up.

"Hello, Bob," said Tuke. "Why the sunny smile?"

Scudmore was one of those bright youths who go through life wearing the motley of court jester to his intimates. He was fair, pink, and monocled. He stood staring down at Watson and Tuke with a twitch of amusement on his lips.

"It always makes me happy," he said, "to see a fellow mending his ways—owing no man anything, you know, and that sort

of thing. Watty, my old friend, you have my congratulations!"

"What the devil are you vamping about, Bob?" growled Watson.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Scudmore. "Don't deny your good deeds!" He turned to Tuke with an air of secrecy. "You may not believe it, Tuke," he said, "but Watty here paid his tailor's bill yesterday. It's a thing he hasn't done for years. Isn't that a fact, Watty?"

"How did you get that bit of information?" snapped Watson.

"Because I saw the check, dear boy. It was lying on the counter when I went into the shop just after you left, and old Snips seemed to think the end of the world was near. Two hundred and fifty of the best, Tuke—think of it! A noble action, Watty, but foolhardy! I say foolhardy!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Watson, flushing. "I've had a bit of a windfall. It's come too late to be any use to me in this country; so I'm taking it abroad with me, and I'm settling things up before going."

Even those most schooled in impassivity betray their feelings at times; and at that moment Anthony Tuke dropped ash on his shirt front.

When Tuke strolled home to his chambers in Morton Place West that night, he felt the thrill of the fisherman who, having cast his fly, sees a ripple in the water. Reaching his rooms, he went to the telephone, called up three different numbers, and gave certain instructions to each. Then he went to bed and slept.

#### IV

It was to verify information that came to him during the day, and on account of a couple of telephone messages that he received just as he was sitting down to a lonely dinner in his flat, that on the following evening, at ten o'clock, Anthony Tuke alighted from his car at the corner of Dame Street, turned into Bond Street, and then strolled by devious ways to Landon's Club.

Landon's, it may be explained to the uninitiated, is one of the best-known gambling clubs in London. It has the reputation of being a place where a man can play any game for any stakes. It was part of Tuke's business to be a member of Landon's, and of other clubs like it. It was part of the secret of his success that, his profession being well enough known, admittance and membership were granted him

without question. A master of foxhounds knows all about his coverts, but he doesn't destroy them!

A quick glance around the room told Tuke all he wanted to know. At a table on the left, Philip Watson was playing roulette with a flushed face and eager eye, and away at the extreme end of the room sat Sir Stephen Maitland, among kindred spirits, holding the bank at vingt-et-un.

"Both safe for a while," thought Tuke.

Strolling toward the baronet, he paused close to Maitland's chair.

"How's the luck?" he asked sleepily, during an interval in the play.

"Not so bad, Tuke," Maitland replied shortly, a nervous twitch flickering his eyebrows.

Tuke glanced at the pile of notes at the baronet's side. He was evidently playing high—a good deal higher than one would expect in the case of a man who had only recently passed through the bankruptcy court.

"From what I hear, your luck seems to have taken a new lease of life all the way round," murmured Tuke. "May I congratulate you on your engagement to a very beautiful lady? You're a dark horse, Maitland! I imagined your affections were fully engaged elsewhere."

There was a quality in Tuke's voice which caused Maitland to look up with a flash of affront in his dark eyes and the red flag of anger whipping across his face.

"Are you being impertinent, Tuke?" he inquired in a venomous undertone. "Or are you—"

Tuke stopped him with an upraised hand.

"Don't finish, Maitland," he said, yawning. "I'm far too sleepy to quarrel. Just put it down to my bad form. Good night!"

Turning away, he left the room before Sir Stephen Maitland could formulate a reply of any kind.

Until he got outside the club, Tuke's stride was slow and careful, but the minute he reached Bond Street he became alert and quick-moving. His car was still waiting for him in Dame Street, his chauffeur-valet at the wheel.

"Mowbury Mansions, as quick as you know how, Arnott!" said Tuke, stepping into the automobile.

Arnott knew his London, and in some-thing under five minutes the big car slith-



ered noiselessly to a halt outside Mowbury Mansions.

"Wait for me a hundred yards farther up," instructed Tuke, and entered the building.

Arriving at the third floor, he strolled nonchalantly along the corridor until he came to a door bearing the name "Mr. Philip Watson."

Here he halted. Through the glass above he could see that the light was on inside of the flat. As he had left Watson deep in play at Landon's five minutes before, he decided that the man servant would be the only person to be dealt with.

Just for a second he hesitated before pressing the bell. There was a pause, and then the door was opened by Watson's man, looking somewhat sleepy and decidedly cross.

"Mr. Watson in?" asked Tuke, taking a step forward, as if fully expecting an affirmative answer.

"I'm sorry, sir—Mr. Watson is out," replied the man.

"Out?" exclaimed Tuke, in a tone of surprise. "Why, I have an appointment with him at eleven o'clock!" He glanced at his watch. "By Jove," he added, "it's only five minutes to. I'll wait. He's sure not to be long. My name is Tuke."

Tuke's manner and personality robbed the man of any uncertainty.

"Very good, sir," he agreed. "If you'll wait in the sitting-room, I'll telephone around and see if I can find out where Mr. Watson is."

"Don't bother to do that," replied Tuke. "I'll wait ten minutes, and if he hasn't returned by then I'll look him up in the morning."

Not until the sitting-room door was closed, and he had heard the man servant settle down in his cubby-hole again, did the air of indifference to time slip from Tuke. Then, with a quick stride, he stepped across the room to a door at the back. He was familiar with the plan of the flats in Mowbury Mansions, and knew that this door gave into Watson's bedroom. With a glance over his shoulder, Tuke entered the room and closed the door.

Four minutes later he was out again, a pucker of thought on his brow. He glanced at his watch, and then, opening the door into the lobby, called to Watson's man.

"I say!" he said. "I don't think I'll wait any longer. I may come back later.

Please tell Mr. Watson that I called, and that I will see him some time before tomorrow night."

"Very good, sir," replied the man, coming forward with drowsy eyes. "Mr. Tuke, you said, I think?"

"That's right," replied Tuke. "Good night!"

Down in the street, Tuke hurried to his car and jumped into it.

"Sir Stephen Maitland's flat, Westberry House, Lancaster Gate," he directed. "Drive like the devil!"

Arnott was used to obeying Tuke's instructions to the letter. Inside a quarter of an hour Tuke had enacted the same little play with Maitland's servant as with Watson's man; but this time he was a little longer in the bedroom, and only just escaped discovery by Maitland's valet.

Tuke went to bed that night with the feeling that, like the village blacksmith, he had earned his night's repose.

## V

At ten o'clock the following morning, a telephone inquiry to Whipstead Grange brought Tuke the information that Jarvis Mortz would not be in the city that day, but would expect him at Whipstead at twelve o'clock.

"Good!" said Tuke, when Arnott delivered the message. "Now ring up Scotland Yard."

It was an amusing conversation that Tuke had with the police officials. They did not agree with his methods in the smallest degree, but Tuke's record of success demanded respect. There was a smile on the criminologist's lips as he sped down to Whipstead Grange, with Arnott at the wheel.

Mortz received him with an expectant eye and eager ear.

"Well?" he asked. "Have you solved the problem?"

Tuke held up a small hand-bag.

"Behold the solution!" he replied with a laugh.

"The pearls?" queried Mortz excitedly.

"Not quite," answered Tuke; "but the best part of the man who took them!"

"Not human remains, surely?" exclaimed Mortz.

"Come into that study of yours," said Tuke, "and I'll tell you all about it. Perhaps," he added, "if Miss Joyce is in, she would like to be present as well."

"By gad, yes!" agreed Mortz. "If the culprit is the man I think, it will open her eyes to the wisdom of her father!"

"It will," replied Tuke, as he followed Mortz into the study.

In a few seconds Joyce Mortz joined them in obedience to her father's summons. She looked extremely beautiful, but the pained expression was still in her eyes.

"Good morning, Miss Mortz," said Tuke. "You will be pleased to hear that I have succeeded in discovering the thief of the pearls."

For a second Joyce Mortz's eyes flickered, but the next instant her lips took on a tense firmness; and although Tuke suspected suspense in her attitude, her words were perfectly calm.

"It may be a mare's-nest, Mr. Tuke," she said.

Tuke shook his head. Laying his hand-bag on the table, he turned to Mortz.

"We'll have the cat in, Mr. Mortz," he said. "I presume you have kept him up, as I asked?"

"I have," replied Mortz, touching the bell. "A darnation nuisance he's been, too! He's made a hideous noise mewing for his brushings; but I remembered what you said, and he's not been touched."

Mortz gave instructions to a footman, and in a few minutes the big black cat was brought in.

"Now," said Tuke, picking up the animal, "will you be kind enough to examine the tip of his tail?"

Mortz laughed.

"Good Lord, Tuke!" he exclaimed. "Is this a conjuring trick?"

"No," replied Tuke. "It's evidence of a theft."

Mortz came forward with an incredulous grin, and, taking the cat's tail in his hands, examined the tip closely.

"I don't see anything," he said after a pause, "except that he apparently got his tail in the paint-pot when the men were doing the inside of the conservatory. He's managed to lick most of the paint off, but there's still some around the root of his tail."

"That's right," said Tuke. "Bearing in mind the cat's habit of rubbing himself against people's legs, I should say that if any one happened to be at that safe when the paint-daubed pussy got affectionate, there would probably be a trade-mark left on him."

An expression of interest sprang into Mortz's face.

"That's right," he said quickly.

"Would you mind opening the safe door, Mr. Mortz?" asked Tuke.

Without speaking, Mortz crossed over and opened the iron door.

"Now look at the bottom of the door, and tell me what you see there," said the detective.

Mortz stooped down and gazed at the inner edge of the door.

"A smudge of white paint," he replied.

"It's faint, as if it was put on with the tip end of a brush. I'll swear it never got on while I was at the safe!"

"No," replied Tuke; "but whoever was at the safe when that smudge of paint got on, presumably by means of the cat's tail, would be more than likely to get a similar brand on his trousers."

"That's right," agreed Mortz; "but, damn it, you can't go around examining people's breeches!"

"No," laughed Tuke. "In this case, however, I was able to narrow the search down to the two others besides yourself and Miss Mortz who knew of the presence of the pearls in the safe."

Going to the table, he opened his bag, and displayed, not human remains, but a pair of dress trousers, across the nap of which was a faint smudge of white paint.

"Whose are those?" cried Mortz eagerly.

Tuke hesitated, and glanced at Joyce.

"Sir Stephen Maitland's," he said.

There was a gasp from Joyce, and then silence filled the room.

"If Maitland's valet," continued Tuke, "had been more zealous in the care of his master's clothes, these trousers would not have convicted the baronet of the theft of your pearls. I took them from his wardrobe last night, after having first examined Philip Watson's clothes."

Mortz flung himself into a chair.

"Well, I'm darned!" he said. "I can't believe it!"

The pain had gone from Joyce Mortz's face now. She was very white, but there was happiness in her eyes. Tuke knew, as he glanced at her, that she had suspected Watson of having given way to temptation, just as both he himself and her father had suspected her of having given her lover the key for that purpose.

"What about the pearls?" asked Mortz, breaking the silence.

"They are safe," replied Tuke. "One of my men found them at a certain receiver's place yesterday. They also found the man who made up the imitation necklaces I took away with me. The description of the man who had the job done left us a little uncertain, so I had to make use of the information I got when I was here the other day. Sir Stephen Maitland is now under the surveillance of men from Scotland Yard."

"But why did he do it?" gasped Mortz. "If he'd wanted money, he could have had it from me."

Tuke shrugged his shoulders.

"I found that the announcement of his engagement to your daughter had brought trouble to him. In order to avoid being sued for breach of promise by another woman, he had to pay a very large sum—much larger than he could afford. That was his motive. He somehow got hold of your keys while he was staying here, and helped himself. The pearls were changed before Watson saw them."

Mortz remained dumb.

"I would have had him arrested," added Tuke; "but I hesitated, remembering that he is your potential son-in-law."

Mortz sprang to his feet.

"Son-in-law be hanged!" he exclaimed. "I sha'n't prosecute him, for I don't want

to raise a scandal; but my girl was right and I was wrong. She shall choose her own husband. We'll give that fellow Maitland twenty-four hours to clear out of the country!"

A slow smile spread over Tuke's face.

"By the way," he said, "I gave a pal of mine a lift down here, and he's waiting for me at the village inn. It's Philip Watson—you know him, don't you? He's just inherited a pot of money from his uncle, Lord Flawton."

Mortz's lips tightened, and then broke into a grin. Tuke noted it, and glanced at Joyce in time to see the glad light leap into her eyes.

With his hands thrust deep into his pockets, Mortz turned to his daughter.

"Joyce," he said, "if you feel inclined, get Watson on the phone, and ask him to come up and lunch with us. Tell him I shall be glad if he will do his best to forget the past."

Joyce, her cheeks aflame, left the room; and a moment later the faint purr of the telephone-bell in the hall came to the two men in the study.

"You're a darned smart chap, Tuke!" said Mortz. "If you could only grow a pair of wings, you'd be a blessed fine Cupid as well!"

"Thank you!" said Tuke.

## AT DUSK

Two chairs across the hearth are faced.

As they were wont to be;

And one of them for her is placed,

And one of them for me.

And when outside the winds arise

And sleet taps on the pane,

I raise my eyes to meet the eyes

That summon mine again.

And when the fire dies almost down

And shadows fill the room,

I see the soft folds of a gown

Across the gathered gloom.

And once when I the embers stirred

To start anew the flame,

A well-belovèd voice I heard—

A voice that breathed my name!

*F. L. Montgomery*

# The Trouble-Scooter

EVEN IN TICKFALL, THE HAPPIEST BRIDE MAY BE THE  
STOLEN BRIDE

By E. K. Means

"ME an' her gits along as peaceful as two pups in a basket, but her paw—he's a potterin' kind of ole foozle—he objects, an' she listens to him."

Bracey murmured this in troubled tones as he sat beneath a chinaberry-tree in the rear of the Henscratch Saloon, the soft drink emporium conducted by Skeeter Butts. His big square hands rested upon the patches on the knees of his overalls; his hat lay on the ground at his feet. He faced Skeeter beseechingly, his brown face drawn with anxiety and his eyes as wistful as those of a hound.

"Ole stuff!" Skeeter muttered with disgust. "You love-birds always sings de same tune—paw objects, paw objects, paw objects! I been listenin' to dat whippewill tune ever since I begun my life-job he'pin' mattermony along!"

"Dat's whut always happens," Bracey said hopelessly. "Paw objects!"

Skeeter took the time to light another cigaret before replying. In fact, his voice at that moment would have been inaudible, for a dilapidated flivver, carrying two new casings and a bag of tools, was going down the road beside his place of business. Every form of senile impairment and decrepitude which would contribute a squeak, a rattle, a bang, or a misfire explosion characterized that neglected and despised gasoline vehicle, and the sharp-faced youth in oily overalls who sat at the wheel was fracturing the speed laws.

"De trouble-scooter!" Skeeter announced, as he puffed at his smoke and watched the clouds of yellow dust settle upon everything.

A cur, which had chased the machine half a block down the street, came out of the dust-cloud coughing. The animal walked to a dripping water faucet, and

caught each cooling drop upon his parched and dusty tongue. The water did not come fast enough to suit him, so the cur shut one eye, looked up in the hole of the water-pipe, and barked.

"Ef you don't see whut you wants, ask fer it," Skeeter chuckled.

"Dat's whut I'm doin' now," Bracey remarked, to distract his friend's attention from the dog.

"Dat trouble-scooter reminds my mind of me," Skeeter announced. "Somebody's gas-buggy is bust. I's de mattermonial trouble-scooter of dis town, an' all de love-struck saddle-cullud sons of Tickfall sends fer me when de love chariot gits a flat!"

A wagon passed, drawn by two feeble and superannuated mules, driven by an ancient charioteer who pondered on nihility, easing his task of driving by letting his team chose their own road, select their own gait and rate of speed, and turn out for obstructions. The wagon was older than the mules and just a little younger than the driver—an antique miraculously held together by strings and ropes and baling-wire, each wheel squeaking its rheumatic complaint of senility with every revolution.

"Dat's Paw Horine now," Bracey said. "He come to town fer three sacks of flour. He's a awful grouchy ole black—acks all de time like he wus settin' on a cocklebur."

"Whut am his objections to you an' Seraphim gittin' married, Bracey?" Skeeter inquired.

"He wants her to marry a nigger whut owns a farm, an' turns up his snoot at me because I's a town coon."

"Yo' come-back is to buy a farm," Skeeter told him.

"Naw, suh! As a farmer, I done took out," Bracey replied in a tone of the utmost finality. "Ain't I been dar befo'? I



done plowed an' chopped cotton an' milked cows an' slopped pigs an' wucked from long befo' day till long atter dark. When sotting time come, de white folks deduck my store account, an' deduck fer de doctor, an' deduck fer medicine, an' deduck fer loss time, an' deduck fer a cow he loant me, an' deduck fer de feed of de cow, an' deduck fer de loss of de cow because she died of de holler-horn. When I farmed, I mighty nigh starved to death. After all de deducks one little lonesome two-bits would jingle in my pocket an' make as much racket as a kickin' jackace in a tin stable. Under dem succumstances, I ain't farmin' to please paw."

"Whut you want me to do about it?" Skeeter asked, as he dropped his cigaret-stub at his feet, adjusted his high collar, shot his cuffs, felt the spot where a part in his hair had been made with a razor, and acted generally as if he were making immediate preparations to proceed at once to do that thing.

"I come here to ax you whut I ought to do," Bracey remarked.

He picked up his big wool hat and fanned his moist face, which was etched in all the lineaments of wo.

"I cain't think up no new mattermony notions," Skeeter complained. "When I tries to think, my head rattles like a ole flivver. Half de time I ain't really know whether I got a new idear or a ole headache. When dis Henscratch Saloom was a real saloom, I was a real smart nigger; but now, when I got to travel on my own hoss-power, I done found out I was a nachel-bawn idjut, an' I been in steady mental deecline ever since!"

"I backs yo' jedgment, Skeeter," Bracey said admiringly. "When you talks in yo' sleep, yo' mind hits on all four cylinders, even ef she do rattle because de radiator is too full of water from too much prohibition. Whut loose idears is you got fer me to-day?"

From this speech Skeeter felt the galvanic vibrations of vanity. He made a try.

"Why don't you git dat gal to elope out wid you?"

"Done pussuaded her five times," Bracey said hopelessly. "Her mind don't stay steady. 'Pears like she cain't keep her brain on straight—wears it eve'y which way, like she do her sunbonnit."

"Dar ain't nothin' mo' onreliable dan a

woman's mind, excusin' her wrist-watch," Skeeter declared gloomily.

"De real reason why she ain't eloped out is dat ole Horine is got some money dat b'longs to Seraphim, an' ef she busts through de fence he won't turn dat money over to her," Bracey said.

"Git you a band of robbers an' go out dar some night an' steal dat gal," Skeeter suggested, not expecting Bracey to take this advice seriously.

At this moment Skeeter arose to drive an exploratory goat out of his place of business. He found a hound-dog snooping around the door, and sailed an empty cigaret-box at him. The missile struck the animal in the ribs, and he went loping down the street howling as if his back was broken in three places and his hind legs dragging like a peacock's tail off duty.

A small boy came in, bought a bottle of pop, and split it one way, making a gurgling sound in his throat like the exhaust pipe of a bath-tub. Skeeter returned to find his friend pondering his advice.

"Would you be willin' to he'p steal dat gal, Skeeter?" Bracey asked.

"Kidnapin' is a awful dangersome job," Skeeter evaded. "In dis State, ef a man steals a baby, de penalty of de law is death. I ain't know whut dey would do to a feller ef he kidnaps a woman."

"How come you fotch up a plan you is skeart to back up?" Bracey inquired.

"I'm brave, but I'm got jedgment," Skeeter assured him.

"Dat plan looks powerful good to me," Bracey asserted. "You could git some niggers to he'p you steal her out. I'll git de Revun Vinegar Atts to be ready to say de obsequies when we tote her to town. We'll have de license ready, an' she jes' cain't he'p herse'f!"

"I'm heared tell of gwines-on like dat," Skeeter said meditatively. "In Affiky, whar we come from, ef a man wants a woman, he bats her over de head wid a cotton-hoe an' totes her off to his cabin an' ties her to de cook-stove. She cain't git loose till she promises to live wid him."

"Dat's a noble notion," Bracey applauded. "It 'll wuck fine on Seraphim!"

"Yep. It 'll wuck backwards, too," Skeeter remarked. "Whut 'll Seraphim do? Whut 'll she say? She don't have to hire no niggers to cuss fer her—she's easy-tongued; an' she might tote a comprehensive gun an' shoot eve'ybody in sight."

"You kin stay over on de safe side of de bayou," Bracey grinned. "I wouldn't have no harm happen to you. Is you willin' to he'p try on dis plan?"

"Kidnapin' comes powerful high financial," Skeeter said, feeling his way toward a profitable business arrangement. "How much dough is you aim to bestow fer de services of de trouble-scooter?"

"I bids ten dollars," Bracey said promptly.

"I raises you to twenty," Skeeter replied. "I's got a good many years to live, an' whenever I risks gittin' cut off short I demands money."

"Twenty is de right amount," Bracey said, and slowly placed four five-dollar bills on Skeeter's knee.

"Add five dollars fer expenses," Skeeter advised.

"Dat's too much!"

"Too much is jes' about enough to be a plenty," Skeeter argued.

"Skeeter, you stop nibblin' at my little wad of dough," Bracey snapped. "You cain't let go no better dan a chicken whut has tumbled into a glue-pot."

"I hopes you don't git stuck up in yo' mattermony plans," Skeeter snickered, placing the money in his lean and hungry purse.

## II

FIGGER BUSH, Pap Curtain, and Hitch Diamond made the Henscratch reverberate with their protests when they were invited to assist in the plan to abduct Seraphim Horine.

"I don't crave to mess wid no kidnapery," Figger Bush squeaked, running his hands over his thick mop of wool. "I'll git all the nap pulled offen my head!"

"You-all needn't ack like a bunch of hawks wid a bear in de bushes," Bracey Axline argued. "All you got to do is to squash dat sour-ball daddy of hern. Nobody 'll know yo' names or see de favor of yo' faces. You kin cut some eye-holes in bags an' wear 'em on yo' heads."

"Yep," Hitch Diamond growled. "An' Paw Horine will kick de slats outen his trundle-bed an' knock my block off! When I fights, I don't wear no blind-bridle."

"I'll let you-all git back to town befo' I comes," Bracey continued, ignoring Hitch's remark. "You kin be at de chu'ch wid Vinegar an' watch de weddin', an' she won't know you he'ped in de robbery."

"Dat makes it some easier," Pap Curtain agreed. "Us goes in one automobile an' you fotch de gal in another."

"Whut about you?" Skeeter asked. "Is you wearin' a mask, too?"

"Naw—I wears my nachel-bawn face, an' whutever happens I totes de blame," Bracey told him.

"When is you aimin' to go?" Figger Bush asked.

"To-night's de night," Bracey said promptly.

"I's as anxious an' willin' to oblige a nigger as a pair of dice," Hitch Diamond said, as he rose to go; "but I ain't in favor of dis doin's. I's a married man myse'f, an' I makes it a rule not to git in no fight wid a woman ef I kin git excused."

"I wus bawnd under de sign of de goat, an' I's always made de goat," Pap Curtain complained. "I always butts in whar I don't b'long."

"Shore!" Skeeter snickered. "I bet when you wus jes' a little feller you warn't nothin' but a kid!"

Seraphim lived eight miles from town. The darkness shut down that night like a cellar door, but the men were blind to the significance of this in view of their great adventure. Their machines wallowed for miles through deep and difficult sand-beds, and brought them at last to a swamp where the dim trail wound three times around every stump and then went into a knot-hole up a tree. The ride consumed one hour.

They crept up to the cabin as quietly as they could; but it is an impossibility to sneak up unnoticed to a negro's habitation. It matters not how poor the occupant may be, there are always from four to forty hounds sleeping in the yard. One of them is sure to be suffering from insomnia, or else his slumber is set with a hair-trigger and goes off at the least sound. His lugubrious howl instantly rouses the whole pack, and the vicinity of that cabin becomes a pandemonium.

One old hound rose up, as gloomy as a bull, and roared his defiance of the intruders. He woke up the rest of the dogs like an alarm-clock. At the first howl the men broke from their places of concealment and ran to the porch. They had no fear of the dogs, for a hound's bark is all there is to him. They wanted to reach the cabin before the inmates were aroused.

The fragile door went down before the

onrush of the men. They plunged into the room where Seraphim's parents were, and by aid of their flash-lights discovered them partially dressed and very much dazed by being awakened so startlingly.

Each hold-up man had a flash-light in one hand and a pistol in the other. It was easy to blind the old folks by the flare of light, to terrify them by the flourish of weapons, and to scare them witless by the masks which concealed the faces of the raiders.

The old people put up their hands without being told. They turned their faces to the wall without a command. They trembled pitifully and mumbled frightened prayers, as the glare of four electric torches from behind cast grotesque shadows on the wall they faced.

"Git busy, Bracey!" Hitch Diamond bawled. "Dese here old niggers ain't no trouble. Dey ack like a door-mat wid 'Welcome' on it!"

Bracey had already gone to the room where Seraphim was. She had dressed hastily. Bracey blinded her by the light, flourished a big pistol about a foot from her face, and backed her against the wall.

We are often told that feminine beauty is enhanced by the glow of electricity. This, therefore, is the time to describe Seraphim Horine so that she can be seen in the best light.

She was as black as the bottom of a deep well in the night-time. She was as strong and agile and feline as a panther. Her eyes glowed with the phosphorescence of a jungle beast, knowing no fear. Her lips curled back from teeth as white as new tombstones and absolutely perfect. Almost everything about her bore the sign of danger. The man who touched her was apt to find himself in the predicament of one who fishes at night—he couldn't be sure what he had hold of.

"I's stealin' you ouden yo' paw's cabin an' totin' you away by fo'ce, Seraphim," Bracey explained easily. "De ole man says he ain't givin' you yo' money ef you marries me, but ef I takes you an' marries you widout yo' cornsent, he cain't keep yo' money back!"

The woman stood with her back to the wall and waited without a word. Bracey laid hold upon the girl's arm. It was like touching the lever that releases the energy of vast machinery created to reduce every neighboring object to a pulp.

Seraphim proceeded to reduce Bracey. She bit and scratched, kicked and pulled hair, tore her lover's clothes, lacerated his flesh, bloodied his nose, and did everything she could to instigate a funeral on his person. In the mighty struggle she reduced to kindling-wood the few pieces of furniture in the room. First the table went over and the lamp was reduced to fragments. Then chairs were smashed, the window glass was kicked out, a mirror was broken, the rickety bed was wrecked, and the bed-clothes were scattered.

Then Seraphim tripped over some bed-covers and fell. Skeeter Butts, who had been running up and down the hallway discharging convulsive yelps, rushed to Bracey's aid, and helped him to entangle the girl in the covers until she abandoned her physical exertions.

When her arms and feet were still, her tongue loosened. Like a Yellowstone geyser spouting up from Hades with a boom and roar, she submerged the two men in a torrent of sulfurous language, an irruption of profanity which emptied the steaming crater. To lift her and take her out of the room was like carrying a sack of wild-cats. In the hall she tore herself free and rushed into the room where the three other men stood guard over her parents.

She was not at all terrified by their pistols. She tore the masks off their faces, called them by name, formed a flying wedge, and hurled herself against each of them in an effort to split them in halves, until the three brave robbers, as Hitch expressed it, "jes' dry-so quit."

They rushed into the hall, and Seraphim followed them. Lying on a box in the hall were three bags of flour, each containing twenty-four pounds. Seraphim laid hold upon one of these bags and hit Hitch Diamond over the head. For five minutes that screaming woman pounded the men with the sacks of flour, filled the hall with white dust, covered the men with the contents of the sacks—oh, she made a satisfactory amount of trouble, furnishing a substantial article of the same, good weight and good measure!

The men struggled and choked and spat; they coughed and cursed; but they were fighting in the dark, and only Seraphim knew the hallway. While the men wasted their strength in bumping against one another and scuffling together, the girl laid on effectively with the sacks of flour.

"My Gawd!" Hitch Diamond bawled, as he staggered toward the door. "Ef I don't git a change of feed, I'll git colic. I's hongry fer solitude!"

He started out to hunt for solitude, but stood hesitant at the door. Solitude did not seem to lie in that direction. The hounds were howling hideously. A sudden storm had swept across the swamp, and the great forest roared like an angry sea. The thunder cracked like artillery, and the rain was like Niagara's plunging flood.

For a moment old Horine had been forgotten. He was just a knee-sprung antique whose legs knocked together when he walked, anyhow—an obstinate old fool as full of kicks as a drove of mules; but now he came up-stage with a single-barrel, muzzle-loading shotgun. When he discharged into the fracas his old gun's first, last, and only charge, each of the brave robbers remembered that he had but one head and had better take care of it. They left the house.

Then Seraphim made a strategic mistake by pursuing the retreating army into the yard. Here they all set upon her and bound her hand and foot with some of the bed-covers which had been dragged out with them. They assisted Bracey in carrying her to the automobile, and followed in their own machine to Tickfall.

The storm continued throughout their journey back to town. What a devil's symphony of music inharmonious to the ear and fearsome to the heart a storm can harp upon the vine-strung branches of the jungle, accompanied by the drum of thunder and the organ-toned cataract of the pounding flood! Seraphim's song of hate, instead of arousing the village, as it would have done on a calm night, sounded like a jay-bird tune winging its way on an isolated fragment of the sea-born gale.

At four o'clock in the morning they aroused Vinegar Atts, who lay in a deep sleep in the office of the Shoofly Church.

"All you wet niggers cain't come in my nice orifice an' slop it up!" Vinegar bawled. "All of you is as damp as tadpoles, an' you ain't got no mo' sense. I'll marry dis here couple out on dis little porch."

They carried the girl from the automobile to the porch and unwrapped her in the presence of the clergyman, after the historic fashion in which Cleopatra was unrolled from the costly rugs in the presence of the Roman general. Seraphim was not

the startling beauty that Cleopatra is said to have been, but both ladies were children of Africa, and could adapt themselves to unfavorable circumstances with becoming and disarming grace.

The marriage ceremony was soon performed, and, to the surprise of every man, the woman turned and followed her new husband to the automobile. When the machine had gone out of the churchyard, Vinegar said solemnly:

"You niggers had better git a coffin to fit de candidate, an' wait aroun' till Seraphim sends you word dat Bracey is good an' kilt!"

The four men did not wait for dawn, but floundered down the road in a driving rain, seeking their homes. Skeeter's machine required his whole attention as it skidded and rocked like a bogged-down mule, but the others discussed, above the shrieks of the storm, the question which they asked one another with wonder and awe:

"Whut will dat swamp-cat do to Bracey when she gits him in dat cabin?"

"I'm happy dat I escaped butchery out at her paw's cabin," Hitch Diamond growled. "Bracey ain't got no mo' show dan a beef in a slaughter-house!"

"She hit me over de head wid a sack of flour an' bust my derby hat," Pap Curtain mourned.

"I'll always be glad I warn't kilt in de rookus," Figger Bush squeaked. "Tomorrow we kin all go to Bracey's cabin an' find him waitin' fer a hearse!"

### III

AFTER his night of strenuous activity, Skeeter sat under the chinaberry-tree hoping that something would happen to jolt him out of the sleepy listlessness of the morning. The night of rain had washed the world clean. Above his head a few drifting clouds were like islands of enchantment glowing in an opal sea. The morning sun had turned the world into a dripping golden grotto. The vegetation was agleam with jewels of moisture, while a mist of purple and gold shimmered from the steamy ground.

Nearer to Skeeter, a puppy followed the trail of an army of red ants until he found them entering the neck of a pop-bottle to consume the few drops of liquid sweetness remaining from some customer's libation to the god of thirst. Then he transferred his attention to a red-headed snapping-bug,



and got bitten on the nose. This was a mystery which required consideration, and he sat down to ponder; but the spot he chose for a seat was occupied by a wasp, which had been threshed down by the storm and was peevish. The puppy rose with a howl, and abandoned the study of entomology.

Ornithology presented an interesting field, so he began to chase the shadow of a buzzard on the ground. Intent on this, he floundered into an old hen who had the care of twenty baby chickens, and the old biddy jumped on his back and rode him under the house.

Across the street a mule colt was chewing the seat out of a pair of overalls, which had just been hung upon the line. A negro boy ran along the fence, dragging a stick across the pickets. The noise thus made frightened the mule, who tore the overalls from the wash-line and galloped around the yard. He stepped on the legs of the trousers and tore them off; then he abandoned the meal, and leaned far over the fence, both ears cocked up like the hammers of an old-fashioned rifle, pointing in the direction of the little colored boy.

All this made Skeeter sleepy. The jolt to wakefulness was administered by Pap Curtain. That colored man appeared around the corner and presented his monkey face with its sneering lips to Skeeter's vision. In his hand Pap held a derby hat, which looked as if an elephant had sat on it holding a hippopotamus in his arms.

"Look at dis lid, Skeeter," Pap complained. "All busted! Got pounded over de head wid a sack of flour. You got to buy me a new bonnit, so I kin hold up my head high in sawsiety 'thout bein' roofed wid a brimless derby."

"How come I got to buy it?" Skeeter asked sleepily.

"Bracey tole me befo' de weddin' dat he gib you twenty-five dollars fer expenssions, an' I done had expensh."

"Dat warn't our arrangements," Skeeter demurred, wide awake at the prospect of losing money. "Twenty dollars was paid me fer brain-wuck in plannin' how to git Bracey outen his trouble. Five dollars only was expense money."

"Dat's enough fer me," Pap said. "Gimme dat five."

"Naw! Mebbe dem yuther niggers had expense, an' 'tain't fair fer you to git it all."

Skeeter began to wail, but Pap was not softened by his lamentations. Pap was the official grave-digger of Tickfall, and he was accustomed to sights and sounds of wo.

"Yo' sufferin' don't break my heart, Skeeter," he sneered. "I wants damages fer my busted derby!"

"Here 'tis!" Skeeter mourned, handing over a five-dollar bill.

Pap disappeared like a diving duck.

Five minutes later Hitch Diamond and Figger Bush came around the corner and stood before Skeeter, with the manifest purpose of showing themselves off. Skeeter exhibited great surprise.

"Gawdymussy! What you two blacks been a doin'—whitewashin'?"

"Dis ain't whitewash," Hitch Diamond growled. "Dis am paste—flour paste."

"Yo' wives must hab rolled out de biskits wid bofe you niggers widout takin' yo' clothes off," Skeeter snickered.

"Dis flour wus wasted on us las' night, when dat nigger gal pounded us wid dem flour-sacks," Figger put in. "She dusted our carkisses good an' chased us out in de rain, an' dis flour done turned to paste. Our clothes is ruind."

With a mournful expression on his lips, Skeeter sprang up, rushed into a little room in the rear of his place of business, and brought out the suit of clothes that he had worn when he was in the firing-squad at the wedding. Alas, it was a dough-pasted ruin! The flour had sifted into the very fiber of the cloth, the rain had converted the flour into a starchy glue, and the garments would never look right again.

"You niggers is a painful spectacle!" Skeeter sighed, gazing at them like disgusted old sheep. "But look at me—my best lodge an' fun'ral clothes all starched up till dey look like a lily of de field! Solomon in all his glory ain't got no clothes like dese!"

"Me an' Figger kin each git a new suit fer ten dollars," Hitch Diamond remarked. "Pap jes' told us dat Bracey sweetened yo' mitt wid some expense money. Give us ten bones per each!"

Then began a long debate on finance, which ended by Skeeter paying each of the men seven dollars and fifty cents, retaining five dollars to cover the damage done to his own garments. Skeeter was constrained to agree to this arrangement, for Hitch was a professional prize-fighter, and a little pocket-edition society boy like Butts had

no show in an argument with the Tickfall Tiger.

The two men went off down the street, leaving Skeeter to curse himself in strict confidence.

"My Gawd!" Skeeter mourned. "I feels like a hummin'-bird—I flits an' flutters from flour to flour!"

And then Vinegar Atts arrived. Glancing at Vinegar's clothes, Skeeter saw that he had no reasonable ground for a claim for damages. He welcomed the colored preacher with the joy of one who was now provided with a sympathetic friend and could tell his troubles. But Vinegar had troubles of his own.

"Skeeter, dat Bracey Axline didn't gimme no money fer gittin' him married. He notified me to colleck from you, as he done gib you money fer expenses. My charges is five dollars."

Skeeter shot up into the air like a Roman candle, and all the balls were blue. When the pyrotechnics were over, there sat Vinegar, with the self-contained dignity of a mud-turtle, explaining, with the politeness of an undertaker at a country funeral, that he "didn't aim to overtax his heart settin' up all night waitin' fer a weddin'-party an' gittin' nothin' fer it but a word of thanks."

Skeeter passed through every stage of grief from snuffles to snorts.

"Don't cry!" Vinegar warned him. "You might git yo' clothes wet!"

Finally this matrimonial trouble-scooter handed over the last five dollars of the expense money. When Vinegar left him, he sat gazing tearfully at the ground, like a little boy who had been spanked and was thinking it over.

#### IV

OUT of Skeeter's deep meditation was born a shrewd financial scheme. He jumped into his automobile and rode back to the Horine cabin. The sand on the road was packed hard by the rain, and he could speed. The inky gumbo mud in the swamp was as slick as ice and as sticky as chewing-gum, and Skeeter could not have expressed his disgust with it if he had hired two friends to help him cuss. He came out at last with a bent fender, a broken lamp-lens, and three oil-cups missing. He was also dragging a hundred feet of bamboo vine entangled with the steering-gear underneath his car.

Entering the Horine house, he could see by daylight the destruction which had been wrought in the struggle of the night before. The flour had been swept up from the floor, and no doubt would be used for bread-making—nothing had happened to it. The rest of the damaged stuff had also been swept up, and would doubtless be used as kindling-wood to bake the bread. He wondered how one woman could break up so much furniture in so brief a time.

"Dat gal shore cut up a lot of didoes out of nothin'?" he soliloquized, when he had called to the old folks and sat waiting for them to return from the field where they were working. When they arrived, Skeeter started at once to business.

"I apologizes to you-all about what happened las' night," he began. "I didn't onderstan' de facks. Now I feels like on-kindness wus did onintentional, an' I's puffekly willin' to he'p you git dat gal back. I thinks, if you is willin' to bestow about twenty dollars fer de good cause—"

"I won't bestow a blame cent!" old Horine interrupted, to Skeeter's astonishment. "I don't crave her back at no price—wouldn't take her back free fer nothin'!"

"I thought you didn't want dat gal to marry," Skeeter managed to say, swallowing his disappointment.

Like heat lightning playing over a dark cloud, a shrewd smile illuminated the old man's owlish face.

"I's knowed dat gal sence she wus bawnded," he replied. "Ef I ever wanted her to do somepin real bad, I tole her she couldn't do it. Den she kep' at it till she got dat thing did."

"I sees," Skeeter said sadly. "An' I onderstan's, attar de way she cut up las' night, why you don't crave her return."

"Dat ain't de fust time she's busted up furnitcher," the old man grinned. "She shore did ack puffekly nachel las' night!"

"An' I realizes, attar de way she talked las' night, dat you don't crave to listen to her no more," Skeeter remarked. "She wus shore outspoken!"

"Lawdy!" her father murmured. "I'd hate to meet de pusson whut kin outspcak her!"

When Skeeter had left town a short while before, in his imagination he had seen against the black clouds of his financial bankruptcy a great arch of heavenly architecture glowing with golden colors. It rose in the zenith, its concentrated pris-

matic glory an emblem of his hope that one end of the arc came down in Horine's cabin, and that he would find some gold at the foot of the rainbow. But alas, the rainbow had shifted its location, and Skeeter saw the complete failure of another financial scheme.

"Whut about dat money you owes Seraphim?" Skeeter asked, after a moment of mournful meditation. "You got to pay it to her, ain't you?"

"Naw!" Horine chuckled. "It wus only fawty dollars to start wid. I invested it fer her, an' de interest on dat investment is done et all her money up. She don't git nothin'."

"Whut you reckon Seraphim is doin' now?" Skeeter asked curiously.

"Gawd knows," the old man said, shaking his head. "I don't keer whut happens, jes' so it don't happen to me."

Then the resourceful Skeeter saw the foot of the rainbow resting on another cabin. Maybe Bracey would now be willing to pay any sum of money to have Seraphim taken back to her father's home. If she cut up as she did before her capture, it was logical to infer that she was cutting up worse now that she was captured. It was safe to presume that Dante on his trip through the inferno had a bully good time compared to the experiences Bracey was undergoing at that moment.

"I think I'll go an' call on de bride an' groom," Skeeter said, as he rose to his feet. "I figger dat by now dey bofe needs my he'p and advice."

"Better keep away, son," the old man warned him. "Ef Seraphim takes a notion to chase you, you'll think de devil is got you by yo' tail-feathers, an' you'll learn ten new roads dat leads out of Tickfall."

## V

On the edge of Tickfall, Skeeter turned and skirted the Cooley swamp, stopping his machine out of sight of the cabin occupied by the newly-weds. When the noise of the machine ceased, he confidently expected to hear other sounds emanating from the cabin, but there seemed to be calm and quietude everywhere.

"Mebbe dey is havin' a intermission while de operator changes de reel," Skeeter chuckled, as he listened to the peaceful sounds of the swamp. A squirrel barked, a partridge whistled, and a mocking-bird started a song of love. "I figger Bracey

is dead," Skeeter said sadly. "Dat silence is like de silence of de grave. I oughter come sooner an' fotch a pencil an' a scrap of paper along to take down a few of his las' words!"

Walking like a frozen-toed hen, he crept through the underbrush, still listening for a vocal outbreak from the cabin. Growing bolder, he walked toward the front door, and yet there was no sound of war, no clash and onset of battle.

"Bracey's dead!" Skeeter repeated with conviction. "Nobody but a dead nigger could be as still aroun' dis cabin as dis stillness is!"

He stopped and sniffed. Enticing odors emanated from the kitchen, and his nostrils twitched.

"Cake! Cake an' fried catfish! Dat swamp-cat has kilt Bracey, and now I'll bet she's havin' a noble eat to celebrate his death!"

He tiptoed up on the porch and peered cautiously into the front room. There he saw Bracey sitting in a red plush rocking-chair, smoking a corn-cob pipe, and grinning like a cat. He bore none of the wounds of war and seemed to be very happy.

"Come in, Skeeter," he said. "Nothin' won't hurt you onless Seraphim take a dislike to yo' face. Ef she do, she'll change it for you."

"Did you come out all right?" Skeeter asked in a whisper, as he sneaked through the door, careful to see that his way of escape was unimpeded.

"Shore!" Bracey said in a loud voice. "Seraphim wus awful mad at me at fust, but I got her eased down."

"Whut did you say to ca'm her?" Skeeter grinned.

"I tole her dat I wus ag'in' de notion of stealin' her outen her cabin, but dat you over-pussuaded me to do it an' wus to blame fer her onconvenience," Bracey told him.

"Good gawsh!" Skeeter snapped. "Ef de roof blowed offen hell, somebody would blame a nigger!"

"Suttinly! Dat's de way niggers is—always airifyin' aroun' monkeyin' wid somepin dey don't know nothin' about; an' den de top blows off," Bracey philosophized mournfully.

"You made a mistake in tellin' on me," Skeeter protested. "Dat makes me de complete goat."

"Shorely! But when I paid you twenty-five dollars to do de wuck, of co'se de responsibility was yourn, too, an'—"

At that moment a shadow fell across the door through which Skeeter had entered. The door was blocked by Seraphim, and his only way of escape was obstructed. He did not have to be told that she had come for him, for she carried a skillet in one hand and a pistol in the other.

Seraphim hit Skeeter three times with the skillet before he escaped through a window in the kitchen. He started through the swamp at his best speed, but Seraphim kept close behind him, stopping at intervals to fire her pistol. Her aim was too accurate for Skeeter's comfort. When the bark flew off of a tree about a foot from the fugitive's head, he made the forest echo with a variety of yells. Bracey stood on the kitchen stoop, cackling with laughter like an old he-hen.

Skeeter finally outran all the pistol bullets, and the jungle swallowed him up. For a long time he squatted in the brush, listening to the thunder-gusts of humiliating laughter as the newly-weds discussed his flight.

At length he ventured to the spot where his automobile was concealed. When he arrived at his place of business, he found his three assistants of the night before waiting for him.

"Has you heard from de weddin' party?" Hitch asked with a grin.

Skeeter took off his hat and laid it on the table. They saw that his head was cut and clotted with blood.

"I jes' come from de love-nest," he replied. "De bride paid me her respects pussonally."

Figger Bush reached over and lifted a soft substance from the back of Skeeter's coat. It was a dirty white in color and about the size of a peanut.

"Whut in de name of mud am dat?" Figger asked.

"Dat is dough," Skeeter explained, eying the object, which lay on the table before him. "Seraphim hit me wid de skillet widout takin' nothin' out of it. She wus bakin' cake."

With his fingers he spread the soft substance out upon the table until it was about the size of a silver dollar—which resemblance served to remind him of his total loss of the money involved in this matrimonial enterprise.

"A heap of good flour wus wasted," he murmured meditatively, "an' here I gits nothin' outen dis whole job but dis little dab of dough!"

"You got all you earnt," Pap Curtain snarled.

"Mebbe so," Skeeter sighed. "I'm a noble trouble-scooter," he added with infinite self-disgust. "De nex' time matrimony troubles starts, Skeeter's gwine scoot to de deep woods till—till—"

"Till dem calamities is overpast," Vinegar concluded.

"Don't make fun of de foolish!" Skeeter snapped, as the men walked out. "You might git struck comical yo'se'f!"

Five minutes later Paw Horine entered the door, and with his peculiar knee-sprung, wobble-legged gait walked to the table where Skeeter was sitting. He placed two ten-dollar bills upon it.

"Skeeter, you is a noble trouble-scooter," Horine said in a voice of beseeching persuasiveness. "I'm skeart Seraphim will git tired of Bracey an' come back to my cabin an' bust up some mo' furnitcher on me. I don't want dat little feemale yearthquake in my home no longer—shakes me up too much in my ole age. I'll gib you dis twenty dollars to scoot over to Seraphim an' fix her so final dat she won't never come home no more."

An adjuster of matrimonial complications must be fertile in invention, elastic in conscience, and evasive in veracity. Skeeter qualified. He snatched the twenty dollars and deposited them safely in his pocket. He placed his hat upon his head to conceal the ravages of his recent visit to Seraphim.

"Ef I goes to de love-nest of de newly-weds, whut 'll happen to me?" Skeeter asked.

"Gawd will take keer of you," Horine assured him.

"I b'lieves dat, Horine," Skeeter said piously, as he fingered the two crisp bills in his pocket. "Gawd has done it."

The old man departed, and Skeeter sat for a long time viewing the familiar scenery with contemplative serenity.

"De best way to earn dis new twenty dollars is to set right here an' leave dem love-birds alone," he murmured. "In fack, when I thinks about goin' out to dat cabin, I feels petrified in my hind legs. I's been dar once, an' I ain't a popular character in dat cabin no more!"



# The Stonehill Mystery\*

A THRILLING STORY OF SUBURBAN LIFE

By Lee Thayer

Author of "The Unlatched Door," "The Mystery of the Thirteenth Floor," etc.

## XXV

PATRICIA'S face was white as she listened to John Garrison's excited announcement.

"Courage, comrade!" whispered the doctor. Crossing the room in haste, he opened the front door. "What is it, John?" he questioned eagerly.

"Ned Driscoll has cabled that he's coming home this week," the young man shouted. "Good old Ned! I'm so glad! Why, what's the matter?"

The old physician's face had perceptibly paled, and he leaned against the door-jamb for support.

"Why, what in thunder's the matter, Dr. S. O. S.? You look as if—"

"Ned Driscoll coming home next week!" the doctor repeated, in a daze.

"Why, yes. He was bound to come soon. He cabled Mr. Carrington, and they telephoned the message out here."

The doctor stepped back into the hall and glanced quickly at Pat. She had risen to her feet and now stood rigid, staring, her clenched hands straining downward along her stiffened body.

"What does he mean?" she whispered faintly.

Dr. Stafford could only shake his head.

"Come in and close the door, John," he called over his shoulder. "Pat's here."

The young man's face was eager and animated as he entered the room, but at the sight of Patricia he stopped short.

"Why, what in Heaven's name is wrong?" he cried, looking from one to the other. "Is there any reason why you aren't glad that Ned—your cousin Ned, Miss Patty—is coming home at last? I should have thought—"

Pat took two steps forward and fixed him with her eyes.

"Aren't *you* Ned Driscoll?" she panted.

His jaw dropped, and his eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" he exclaimed. "Whatever made you think such a thing?"

"Do you mean to tell me that this isn't a picture of you?" cried Pat incredulously, jerking the snap-shot from her pocket.

"Why, of course it is," he admitted at once. "That was in the trenches near Verdun, I think—one that Tom Ambers took. He was always snapping everybody."

"Then you knew Tom Ambers?"

"Why, certainly I did. He and Ned were great pals, and the three of us chummed together for a long time. Where did you get it?"

"Alicia Ambers sent it to me," said Patricia, gazing at him fixedly.

"Tom's sister! How did she come to have a picture of me? If it had been Ned, now, I wouldn't have wondered so much."

"John," said the doctor, touching the young man's arm, "Miss Ambers was under the impression, when she sent this to Pat, that it was a portrait of Ned Driscoll."

"Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed Garrison.

The doctor and Pat spoke almost in the same breath.

"And you aren't Ned Driscoll?"

"You aren't my cousin Ned?"

"I am not. Not any—no!" He shook his head in violent denial. "How Alicia Ambers happened to imagine that this snap-shot of me was Ned Driscoll, I can't think. Ned's been writing to her for a long time, I know, but he never would have sent

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her a picture of me. Why should he? He's enough sight better-looking than I am; and before I left he was as good as engaged—great Scott!"

Pat had dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands. With one long stride, John reached her and flung himself on his knees at her side.

"Pat! Oh, my dearest dear little girl! Did Alicia Ambers write you that—oh, Pat, sweetheart, did you think—"

He took her hands in his and drew them gently away from her face. Their eyes met and held. Neither of them heard the soft closing of the door.

"Pat, I love you!" he whispered. "I've never loved any one but you. It's all a beastly mistake. You must believe me! I—oh, tell me that you do believe me, little girl! I can't bear—"

"I don't understand—I can't see—but oh, I do believe in you, John! You are John, after all?"

"I am John, dear," he said, "and I love you, love you, love you! You are the only thing in life to me. If I had lost you through a misunderstanding—oh, I've been to blame! If I hadn't been a silly, romantic fool, I'd have—tell me, Pat!" He spoke swiftly, urgently. "Tell me when you first suspected that I—that I was—"

"I thought on the very first day when you came out to see Uncle Morgan—I thought then that you might possibly be Ned, and that you didn't say anything because of my driving the car as a taxi. You understand?"

He nodded.

"When you came again," Pat continued, "I thought you weren't very—well, frank, you know—about yourself and your people. I thought you seemed just a little embarrassed when mother asked you about the Miss Garrison she used to know. And then there was the photograph I found in Uncle Morgan's table drawer—"

"What photograph?" he asked swiftly.

"The old one of the Harvard crew, and you were among them."

Again he nodded slowly.

"Yes—I remember the group. Ned was in it, too. I can show you—"

"And, John," she broke in, with a troubled, earnest look at his face, "there were all the men's names written on the back—Driscoll, and—I don't remember the others, but there wasn't any Garrison, and I thought—"

The young man bowed his head.

"You thought I was masquerading," he said in a stifled voice. "So far, you were right, Pat. My name is John Garrison, but that isn't all of it. My last name is Vanderpool. Oh, Pat, dear, forgive me!" he cried, raising his pleading face to hers. "I'm so damned rich, and I've had such a rotten time! All those old hens of mothers clucking around after my filthy money, and all the girls with their greedy little eyes on the main chance! A crowd of them came flocking around as soon as they knew I was home, and I saw it was going to be just the same old rotten chase over again—and I had just come back from over there, where things were *real*. Then I saw you, and I thought—oh, forgive me, dear! I thought I'd just like to know a real girl like you, sweetheart—to know her on the level, without my beastly money spoiling it all. Can you understand? I'm saying it so badly, I know. It didn't take me long to realize that the money wouldn't have made any difference to you, one way or the other; but I had started in, and somehow there hasn't seemed to be any good chance to tell you until now. I was having such a wonderful time, and I was a coward—I didn't know how you'd take it. Oh, Pat, it's the only way I have deceived you—on my honor! It's the only thing I've hidden. Say you forgive me, dear, dear little sweetheart!"

John Garrison was still holding both her hands clasped tightly in his own. Now he drew them close and pressed them against his heart.

"Tell me!" he whispered.

The girl breathed a long sigh, and closing her eyes, raised her face to his.

"I love you!" she said, and all the world of sorrow and misunderstanding was blotted out as their lips met.

## XXVI

It was some little time later that Pat softly opened the kitchen door. She hesitated on the threshold when she became aware that Dr. Stafford was not alone.

The doctor gave one look at her face and turned hastily.

"It's all right, Marco," he said, addressing the smiling Italian, who stood on the little back porch. "You can have the afternoon off if you need it. Be sure to be here to-morrow, though. I don't know how we'd manage without you."

"All righta, boss! Me on da job early to-morrow."

The grinning face disappeared, and the doctor turned back swiftly to Patricia.

"Well?" he said.

The girl did not speak, but advanced toward him, her face suffused with a tremulous glory which made the old doctor blink.

"Is it all right, Pat?" he asked huskily.

With a quick, fervent gesture she threw both her arms around his neck and hugged him tight.

"Oh, it's so very much all right, dear Dr. S. O. S.!" she cried softly.

He caught her slender young arms in his hands and held her for a moment, his kind old face resting against her hair.

"God keep you, my little comrade!" he murmured with a catch in his throat.

"Oh, I'm so happy—so happy!" She drew back a little way and looked into his eyes. "Do you think there's any girl in the world as happy as I am, dear Dr. S. O. S.?"

"I should doubt it very much, my dear," he answered gravely, though his eyes twinkled.

"Come into the living-room. We need you, John and I. We shall never be able to get along without you, you know, so you might as well make up your mind to that. We want to talk over things with you, and to ask your advice about—oh, all sorts of things!" She sighed happily. "There's so much to think of—so many plans to make. There are all your poor people—we can help you to help them, now. John says that the one time he drove you over to Harford gave him the willies—that's what he called it. He wanted to tell you then about his having all that fearful lot of money, and—"

"Hold on, Pat! You're making me dizzy. What do you mean by 'fearful lot of money'? I thought John was poor—that he—take me to John, and perhaps he can put me straight. My head's going round and round."

John explained his innocent deception, apologetically and at length, much to the old doctor's sympathetic amusement.

"It was a lark, I can see that, but it was rather dangerous business," said Dr. Stafford, shaking his head at John. "You might have made an awful mess of things, you know. Even now there are some things I don't understand. One of them is—how

do you happen to be driving Mrs. Sturdevant's car as a taxi?"

John looked surprised.

"How did you know it was my aunt's car?" he asked.

"Oh, Mrs. Sturdevant is your aunt, is she?"

"Yes—she's my mother's sister. Her name was Garrison—my mother's name. The Jane Garrison that your mother knew, Pat, is my aunt, too. I nearly had heart failure when she asked me about her; but I got by with it all right."

"Does Mrs. Sturdevant know that you are driving her perfectly good Dauntless as a hack?" asked the doctor, grinning at the thought.

"She does by now, or will soon. She won't mind. She's a perfect brick. I wrote her about it the day I took it out of her garage. I had the key, because I'm keeping my own car there temporarily. I couldn't use mine—it's a two-seated run-about and wouldn't have answered, but, oh, it's a bully little car—goes like a streak. You'll love it, Pat!"

"And you took out a new license," said Dr. Stafford, "so that if you happened to get into any trouble with your taxi, Mrs. Sturdevant wouldn't be bothered about it. Was that it?"

"Why, yes, doctor—of course; but how did you know I got a new license?"

Then Stafford confessed his secret effort to decide the mooted question whether John was or was not Ned Driscoll, and they all had a good laugh at the fruitlessness of his quest. When the laughter had subsided, John leaned toward the doctor and said:

"Dr. Stafford, I can't tell you how—how bully I think it is of you to accept my word for—for everything, as if I'd never been such an idiot as to deceive you. Pat hasn't asked for a bit of proof that what I've told her this morning is really so, and neither have you; but I feel that I owe it to myself to present my—credentials, would you call them?—to you, since Mr. Carrington isn't here. If he were, it wouldn't be necessary, for I've met him several times."

"It isn't necessary to show them to me, John," replied the doctor. "I flatter myself that I'm a pretty good judge of men, and while you didn't tell us the whole truth, you did tell us, in the main, the truth and nothing but the truth, as far as it went, didn't you?"

"Yes," John laughed. "Just the same," he added, with a quiet dignity which became him well, "I want to show you what papers I have with me. I have my discharge from the army and my commission, and maybe, Pat, you'd like to see a couple of crosses they gave me over there."

"Oh, John, I'm just crazy to see them! And you'll tell us all about how you won them?"

"Oh, that was just a fluke—a piece of good luck. I didn't do anything."

It was what almost every American boy said when he came back with honors bestowed by European and American governments alike. If one accepted those deeds of heroism in the great war at the valuation of the principal actors in them, one would have been forced to the conclusion that most of the war decorations were most injudiciously awarded!

It was in vain that Pat and the doctor questioned and suggested. All they could get was a bare, rather apologetic statement.

"I happened to see how we could clean out a machine-gun nest that was bothering us a lot, so we just went ahead and did it, that was all. And that other time—well, he was an awfully decent little chap, and I couldn't let him lie out there in that hell between the lines."

What John had done, it appeared, was really nothing, nothing at all. The other fellows all did as much and more. We have all heard just such stories as this, and have had to fill in the courage and heroism for ourselves.

They gave it up, after a time, and turned to more immediate considerations.

During the latter part of the conversation Pat had been looking at the picture of John which had been taken in the midst of the scenes he described so quietly. It brought her mind back to the friend who had sent it to her.

"I don't know what I ought to write to Alicia Ambers," she said. "I wish you'd advise me, Dr. S. O. S. John can't think of any reason why Ned Driscoll should have sent this photograph to her instead of Ned's own, and yet there must have been a reason. John doesn't want—"

"I don't want to butt in, you see," said John. "I know Ned's crazy about Tom's sister, and since he's coming home so soon I'd rather let him explain it in his own way. The situation is a little delicate, you see, and I can't understand—"

"Let me look at the picture again, Pat," said the doctor, taking it from her hand. "H-m! This is only part of a photograph," he mused. "You see the white edge of the print runs around three sides only."

John leaned forward.

"I hadn't noticed that, in the excitement," he said. "Yes, I remember the picture now. It was a snap-shot that Tom Ambers took of Ned and me together. It's been cut in two, and—by George, I wonder! Mike Finnegan! If he'd had the chance—"

He slapped his open hand down on the table.

"If Mike Finnegan had the chance, it's the very thing he would have done—put in the wrong half of the picture, I mean. And he might have done it. He was detailed to collect the mail about that time, I'm pretty sure. He made an awful row by enclosing some cooties in a letter that hadn't been sealed. They were dead, so it didn't really matter; but Bill Rankin's girl was furious about it, and Bill went for Mike like a crazy windmill. Now, just imagine—"

He hitched his chair forward.

"Supposing, Pat, that Ned, just before he sealed his letter, had cut the photograph in two and thrown this one of me away; and supposing that Mike came along just then and told Ned to hurry with his mail, and that Ned gave him the letter to Alicia Ambers before the gum on the envelope was dry. We were all joshing Ned about writing so often to a girl he'd never seen, and Mike was pretty sure to have known about it. He's just the sort to have thought it great sport to put one over on Ned. As soon as Ned was out of sight, he'd have opened the letter, slipped out Ned's picture, and put mine in place of it. Look here!" he exclaimed excitedly. "See this little smear of dried mud on the corner? I'll bet anything you like that Ned threw this away, just as I said, and that Mike Finnegan was the one who sent it to Alicia Ambers!"

And this, as they found out later, was almost exactly what had happened. The silly practical joke had come near wrecking several lives, though Alicia Ambers never would admit that she didn't greatly prefer the real Ned to the portrait which she had supposed to be his. It caused Pat to feel, though she did not mention it, that



in this instance her friend displayed a surprising lack of good taste.

## XXVII

OH, but this was a day of days for Mrs. Carrington! Her "tender mother heart," to quote her own words, thrilled over her daughter's happiness. The fact that John Garrison had turned out to be one of the Vanderpools—"the Vanderpools of New York," she could hear herself saying to her friends in Speedwell—was received by her with almost religious ecstasy. It seemed quite natural and proper that an all-wise and beneficent Providence should take pleasure in watching over the destinies of an aristocratic family like the Desmonds of North Carolina.

There really was nothing left for her to desire. John, with wonderful consideration and generosity, had insisted at once that he should buy back, for her own use, the old home at Speedwell. She could see herself queening it there, the house restored to its original splendor, and all the North Carolina county families for miles about enjoying its old-time hospitality.

It did not matter in the least that John and Patricia would be living in the Vanderpool mansion in New York. She was ready to "sacrifice anything to her darling child," and she would not be lonely. There were plenty of distant connections of her own family who would be only too glad to come for long visits in "the dear old Southern fashion." They would be much easier to manage—though this she did not think necessary to mention—than Patricia, of whom she had always stood a little in awe. It was even better than it would have been if her unacknowledged dream of making a happier life for Morgan had materialized.

There would be money—plenty of money—to be had, even without the asking. She was so glad that she had always lived a pure, unselfish life, and could feel that all these and other bounties were so richly deserved!

Now Morgan Carrington's unexplained absence troubled her not at all. She thanked Heaven, with upturned eyes, that she was not one to dwell upon past sorrows, and she threw herself, heart and soul, into the happiness of her darling child.

Pat did not so lightly forget her dear father's brother who had been so kind to her. Her joy was tempered by the grief that he was not there to share it with her;

but she resolutely put the thought behind her, and entered with enthusiasm into the discussion of John's plans for a happy future.

"I'm eager to have you meet my people, Pat," he said. "You're going to like my two aunts, I know. Frances—Mrs. Sturdevant, you know, the one whose car I stole—she's so little older than I am that I've always called her Frances—she's a winner, and I can hardly wait for her to get back from the other side. She'll love you, dear, and I know you'll love her. And there are the houses that were wished on me by the family. Some of them are rented now, but you can look them over and see which you'd like to have. The old family morgue on Fifth Avenue is pretty good—at least I think it would be when you took hold of it. I've kept it sort of half-open, and it's rather a jolly old shack, or it was when father and mother were alive. Then we have another place just across the river, above here. Frances has been living there, off and on, for a few weeks in the spring and fall, to keep it in order for me. How would you like—oh, Pat, wouldn't it be fun to go over this afternoon and see it? There's a bully little Italian garden, just at the foot of the Palisades. It would be a perfect setting for you. There'll be no more taxicab business for us, little girl," John laughed with boyish enthusiasm; "but it was larks while it lasted, wasn't it?"

"Yes, John," Pat smiled up at him. "It was jolly—most of it; but I had a rather bad half-hour, just at the last, and I'm glad it's over."

John shut his teeth together.

"So am I," he said. "That infernal cur! Oh, well, let's not think about him. How about going across the river this afternoon? I can phone and have them give us a sort of picnic supper. There's a caretaker there, and his wife's a bully cook. They have a garden, and chickens. Oh, they can fix us up all right!" He leaned over and whispered. "Your mother wouldn't think we needed a chaperon, would she? We'll be back early in the evening."

"I don't believe she'll mind anything you propose, John, and I think it would be too lovely! I've looked over at that side of the river with longing eyes ever since we've been here. It looks so remote and wonderful, but I didn't know there was

any way of getting over there from this side."

"Oh, yes—there's a little motor-boat that comes across to a pier at Dorr's Ferry, if you run up a signal, and it's like getting right out of the world. Once you're over there, you'd think you were a thousand miles from New York. Come on—let's ask your mother."

Thus it was that, soon after lunch, the two young people, with all the world before them, started to view a portion of that part of it which, in a special sense, already belonged to John Garrison Vanderpool.

They walked along the aqueduct to Dorr's Ferry and descended through the quiet village to the small pier below the railroad-station. John proceeded to raise, by means of a rope, a large white board which ran up between two long posts and formed a somewhat primitive but effective signal to the ferryman upon the other side of the river.

The time did not seem long to them as they waited, sitting on the string-piece of the dock, dangling their feet over the edge and talking happily of all things under the sun. They had so much to say to each other that it seemed as if only a few minutes had passed before they saw a small power-boat advancing leisurely across the silky-smooth water.

As soon as it was within hailing distance, John called out:

"Hello, Captain Brown!"

The man in the stern shaded his eyes with a wrinkled, tanned hand.

"Well, if it isn't Mr. John!" he exclaimed. "It's glad I am to see you home, sir, safe and sound. We've been expecting of you for a long time. Why didn't Martin let me know you was coming across this afternoon? I'd 'a' been here waiting for you," he concluded, grinning up at them as the boat bumped along the float.

"I wasn't sure, when I phoned Martin this morning, just what time we'd be coming over, and we weren't in any hurry," said John.

He helped Pat into the boat, while Captain Brown held it steady with a rope thrown around a bulkhead. He shook the old man's free hand with engaging cordiality and turned to Pat.

"Captain Brown and I are old, old friends, Pat," he said. "We netted shad together when I was so little that he had to sit on me part of the time to keep me in

the boat. Are the shad running now, Captain Brown, or is it too late?"

"It's a bit late, and there's very few shad nowadays," returned the captain.

He was looking at Patricia with the frank curiosity of a man whose life is spent in the quiet places of the earth.

"This is my fiancée, Miss Carrington, Captain Brown," said John with pride.

It was the first time he had introduced her to any one, and he was pleased by the look of admiration and respect which he saw in the old man's eyes. He knew that all the servants and retainers, especially in the old home where they lived and died in the service of the Vanderpools, were inclined to be jealous of every one who came into the family.

"You'll be making the old place look like itself again, miss," said the captain with a smile, touching his cap. "It's been a long time since there was any young people about, and we'll all be glad if the old house is to be occupied for more'n a few weeks, spring and fall. I wish ye both joy, Mr. John—I can't say no fairer nor that."

Slightly embarrassed by his boldness, the old man cast off and started his engine.

Pat felt that never in her life had she seen anything so adorably beautiful as the great river on that clean June day. The wind blew softly from the northwest and the air was clear, with a vital thrill which set her pulses racing. She and John sat close together in the stern, their clasped hands hidden by a fold of Pat's skirt. The captain, with his back discreetly turned, divided his attention between the tiny engine and the wheel.

The little boat cut its way steadily through the blue and green undulations of the water. As they moved westward, the Palisades, which from the other side appeared like a flat wall of rock, developed great battlemented buttresses crowned with living green, stupendous, lonely, and inaccessible save for the cascade of tender green fields and woods which flowed down through a broad valley to the shore toward which the boat was headed.

Patricia's eyes were shining with the joy of life when they landed, and all that afternoon seemed to her like an exquisite dream. The old stone farmhouse, built by Peter Vanderpool in the time when Dorr's Ferry was really a ferry town and New York was yet in its robust infancy, had remained

practically unaltered. Few strangers used the rough, winding road which was its only link with the back country; and as the Vanderpools had owned the ferry and several miles of the river front for more than a century, they had been able to preserve the beautiful solitude of the place.

The sunny peace of the lawns and meadows, the gracious stillness of the great trees that shaded the path along the river, made a perfect setting for an idyl of love and joy and hope.

After they had stopped at the house and received a cordial welcome from Martin, the caretaker, and his wife, the two young people, in the understanding silence of utter happiness, made their way along the rocky path, hand linked in hand, like children. As they descended toward the shore, Pat became aware of the sound of trickling water. Suddenly, at a turn of the path, looking out from the shadow of the trees, she saw the delicate tracery of broken, leaping drops falling athwart the sunlight from a great height of rock and moss and ferns. She caught her breath.

"Oh!" she cried, and again: "Oh!"

She could not say anything more, but the look on her face was enough for John.

The water fell into a deep, broad pool of warm-colored stone. From thence it ran under the path into a mossy marble basin, above which an old Buddha sat in endless contemplation. Stretching in front of him was an avenue of towering cedars, and between the dark trees were set great green casks from which grew pink and white oleanders. At the end of the avenue, against the blue waters of the river, crowned with a trellis and covered with golden-green masses of vines and budding grapes, were thick white columns, so perfect in their setting that they seemed, like the trees, to be a generous product of the soil. They were set in two rows along the river, upon a broad, lichen-painted base, which curved outward in the center on the shoreward side, leaving space for a round, shallow pool, on which water-lilies floated.

"If you look in there," John whispered, for the silence was too perfect to be broken by more than a breath, "you'll see Undine. She comes up from the river every day, looking for her soul. She'll find it to-day. Look in, dear heart—you'll see it in her eyes. You'll see her soul in her dear eyes," he repeated, as they bent together above the clear pool.

The reflection of the two young faces broke as a tanager, like a scarlet flame, darted by and touched the surface with his wings. When the pool was still again, upon its mirror lay the shadow of two slender figures, clasped in each other's arms.

"My girl!" John whispered. "My little sweetheart! My dear, my dear!"

## XXVIII

THE golden day wore on. When the shadows began to steal out across the sunny river, Martin, heralded by the faint rattle of a light hand-cart, appeared. At the end of the path he took a wicker hamper from the cart and carried it down to the old stone table at one end of the pergola. His wrinkled face shone as he took from its depths a covered silver dish filled with fried chicken, delicately brown. There followed a crisp salad; little hot rolls folded together so that they looked as if they were laughing, Pat said; and, to crown the feast, an antique blue Chinese bowl of fragrant strawberries and a pitcher of thick cream.

"Next to all the rest of this wonderful world, I think this is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," said Pat. "I'm hungry, John, oh, so hungry, though I didn't know it till Martin came like a jinnee in the 'Arabian Nights'!"

Martin, thus referred to, grinned appreciatively and looked to his young master for orders.

"Tell Susan for me, Martin, that I think she's sent us everything that heart could desire," said John. "You needn't wait. You can come back for the things in a couple of hours. There's no hurry."

Martin chuckled as he went back along the path.

"No hurry, Mr. John, no hurry!" he said to himself. "Sure there's no hurry for the likes of me, when the young master brings his sweetheart home! It's a good job for all of us, I should say, by the look of her sweet face. Well, he deserves her, God bless him! I'll not hurry, Mr. John"—shaking his gray head—"you may be sure of that. I was young once myself!"

Slowly the shadows of the cliffs stretched themselves upon the waters. Clear and blue, the great arch of the sky towered above them. Tall clouds strolled across the azure fields, like leisurely gods and goddesses, in no haste to make their way back to Olympus.

When the last warm tints of the after-

glow had faded, John rose and stretched out his hands to Patricia. She took them with a little sigh of utter contentment.

"I suppose this means that our wonderful day is over, John," she said, smiling happily up at him.

"Over for to-day, sweetheart," he answered, putting his arm about her as they strolled along the path; "but it's home, home, home for you and me, forever and ever! There'll be other days, and even brighter days than this, for both of us. My great-great-great-grandfather built this place, and his children grew up around him under these same old trees."

She drew closer to him, and the clasp of their hands tightened. The shadows of evening closed in around them.

They did not return to the old house, but kept on through the woods to the road which tumbled down to the river. Their minds were full of themselves and of the future. So shut away they seemed from all the ordinary things of life that when they neared the edge of the wood, they were startled by the sound of voices just ahead.

"Only a farmer or some one from the back country going down to the ferry," John explained in a low tone. "We'll let them pass."

But though they waited in silence for a moment, the voices did not diminish. They were low and guarded, but one of them struck John as familiar. He and Pat were both wearing tennis-shoes, so that their feet had made little or no noise, and the two men, earnestly conversing, were quite unaware of their presence. John leaned down and whispered in Pat's ear.

"Doesn't that sound like our friend Marco?" he asked.

He heard her gasp a little. She clutched his arm, and, with her other hand, drew his head down to the level of her lips.

"The other voice!" she panted. "Did you ever hear it before? It sounds—oh, John!"

Tensely still, they both listened.

A man coughed slightly, and Pat's fingers bit into John's arm. The voice came clearly now in the dead silence, quick and decisive.

"Well, it's about time, anyway, only—"

"Uncle Morgan!" cried Pat, leaping forward. "Oh, Uncle Morgan!"

"What? Why, good Lord, it isn't—why—"

Two men stepped out from the shadows and stood faintly silhouetted against the lighter darkness of the open road. Pat sprang toward the less bulky shape.

"Uncle Morgan!" she cried again. "Are you real? Is it really you, at last? Oh!"

She threw herself into his arms.

"Why, Patty! Why, Patty, my child! Do you really care? Do you care so much? Why, I didn't think—there, there, my dear. It's all right. I was coming home in a few days, anyway. Oh, don't cry, little girl! Damn it, I'm not worth it! Marco, you infernal fool, why didn't you tell me? Oh, there, there, Patty! God bless you, my dear, I had no idea—"

He clasped her closely in his arms and kissed her with a quick abrupt gesture in which there was no lack of feeling.

"Marco," he said, still holding her in his arms and addressing the shadow at his side with real anger in his voice, "you didn't tell me about this, damn it! You said Miss Patty was all right, happy as a bird most of the time, and all that sort of thing. I might have known she'd put up a good front and you'd never see anything! Oh, confound it all! Patty, my dear, listen. I did it for you—do you understand? I guess I was an old fool, but it seemed a good idea. I couldn't think of any way of winning that—I mean your mother—over, and I wanted you to have a chance. I thought—" He broke off suddenly. "But what are you doing on this side of the river at night and alone, my child?"

Just then John stepped forward.

"She isn't alone, Mr. Carrington," he said. "I brought her over to see—"

"Oh, you're the young man Marco told me about," interrupted Morgan Carrington, peering at him in the dim light. "Garrison, wasn't it?"

"Yes and no, Mr. Carrington," said John, coming closer and holding out his hand. "It's John Vanderpool—Ned's friend, you know. I met you several times at the Ascot, do you remember?"

Carrington looked at him closely.

"Why, yes," he said slowly. "Yes, I think I would have recognized you if the light had been better; but I thought—Marco said that the young man who was staying in my house was named Garrison."

"So I am," said John, somewhat embarrassed. "My name is John Garrison Vanderpool."



"H-m!" grunted Carrington. "I see; but what the devil do you mean by—"

John explained, at length, what the devil he meant.

Carrington listened in silence. At the end, he turned his face toward Pat, who still stood in the protecting circle of his arm. He put his hand under her chin and lifted her face to his.

"What do you say, Patty?" he asked. "Have you forgiven this young masquerader for fooling us all? Well, then I suppose I must, too;" and he held out his hand. "I'm not exactly in a position to find fault with youthful pranks when at my age—oh, well, let's all go home. What do you say? We can talk it all out comfortably there; and good old S. O. S. will want to hear the whole story. How is the old boy? Marco says—what were you saying about Dr. Stafford just now, Marco?"

"I say Doct'r Staff' gooda man, me, yes," said Marco, speaking for the first time, though he had been listening with eager interest and curiosity. "I say he de bes' gooda man I know, 'cep' de boss, yes."

"Oh, he's a lot better than I am, Marco. The less said about me, the better," said Carrington ruefully. "Come on—it's nearly nine o'clock. Brown said he was crossing back at nine, didn't he, Marco?"

"Yes, boss."

"Well, he can take us all back together. You tell your brother for me, Marco, that he can have the things I left at his house. He's welcome to them, especially the shaving-kit. Thank God, I won't have to shave again as long as I live!"

"I was going to ask you about that, Uncle Morgan," said Pat, as they made their way down the steep road, John on one side of her, Carrington on the other, and Marco bringing up the rear. "You look so strange without your beard, even in this light, that I wouldn't have known you except for your voice and that little cough of yours. I should recognize that anywhere."

"H-m, yes, I suppose you would. Shaving my beard was another of my bright ideas. I'll tell you all about it when we get home. Don't care to go over it more than once. Rather hear about you, and John Vanderpool, and all that you've been up to since I went away. Marco's kept me pretty well posted about outside facts; but he couldn't be on deck all the time, and

his opportunities were somewhat limited, though, of course, he did his best."

Marco grinned in the darkness. It was a great deal for the boss to say, and he knew it.

All the way across the river and up to the house, Morgan Carrington kept the young people talking about themselves. He refused, with his customary peremptoriness, to answer any further questions. When they neared Dr. Stafford's door he paused.

"Let's all go in and spring ourselves on Stuart," he said, chuckling. "I think, if it pleases the heavenly powers, I can put off explaining to your mother, Patty, till the morning."

John laughed inwardly. He could readily appreciate Mr. Carrington's wish to put off an evil day. Even Pat could sympathize with her uncle's feelings. It wasn't really necessary to bother her mother tonight—and she knew that Dr. S. O. S. would be so rejoiced.

The doctor's living-room was lighted, and through the open window they could see the old man seated beside the table, reading.

Carrington motioned them to be silent and wait, and alone he advanced to the door.

"Did you get your watch from Tiffany's all right, Stuart?" he said quietly.

The doctor started, rose to his feet, and stood facing his old friend. After a moment he said quite calmly:

"Yes, Morgan, I got it without any trouble. Where the devil have you been? And what have you done to your face?"

"Never mind my face, S. O. S.," said Carrington, somewhat nettled. "Aren't you surprised to see me?"

Stafford grinned.

"Yes, of course I am, in a way, Morgan," he said; "but I'm not going to pamper you by letting you see it."

He put his hand on his friend's shoulder and gripped it hard. For a moment the two men looked into each other's eyes. Then their hands met in a strong clasp.

"H-m, h-m!" said Carrington, clearing his throat. "Come in, Patty, and you, too, John Vanderpool. Old S. O. S. has taken the blow of the prodigal's return standing, as usual. You come in, too, Marco. They may want your testimony."

The grinning Italian followed John and Pat into the room. The doctor verbally

expressed no surprise at seeing Marco in such company, but his eyebrows were raised to an interrogation-point as he watched his faithful gardener seat himself gingerly on a chair near the door.

"Now tell us all about it, Morgan," said Stafford, when they were all seated. "Begin at the beginning, and let's have it straight through to the end. Why, in Heaven's name, did you cut away, and where did you go?"

"I went away on Patty's account, in the first place," said Carrington, stroking the ghost of his vanished beard. "I'd got it into my head that there was only one way for her to have any decent sort of life, and that was to give her some kind of a profession. I worried myself nearly sick about it, but I couldn't make any impression on her mother—at least I—or, well, I mean not the kind of impression—you know what I mean—she wouldn't give her consent."

Stafford smiled, realizing that Morgan would hardly go further into another reason for his wishing to disappear—a reason which was clear to the doctor, since he had been an amused witness of Louise Carrington's discreet pursuit of her wealthy brother-in-law.

"Well," Carrington continued, "I studied the thing over, and it seemed to me that if I were to vanish, and Patty were left entirely without funds, she'd be absolutely on her own, as they say, and that she'd get what was best for her. The thing appealed to me in a lot of ways, and I knew just how it could be done. I had it all planned out, but I hadn't quite made up my mind to do it, when you, Stuart, and Patty, found that Black Hand thing on the door. I saw at once that it would give quite a lurid color to my disappearance, and would make it seem natural and convincing. It was such a good chance that I couldn't bear not to take advantage of it, and on the spur of the moment—I just left. I didn't think you'd mind so much, Patty, my dear. I really didn't!" He turned to her with an almost pleading note in his voice. "You were so young, and I didn't know you really cared much about your cross old uncle. Why should you?"

"Oh, but I did, Uncle Morgan!"

"Yes, yes—I see that now, my dear; but I didn't know. I just thought it would be a way of getting for you what you wanted most. I was a fool, as usual. You needn't say it, S. O. S.; I can see it for my-

self. However, it's over now. No use going back, is there, Patty?"

"No, Uncle Morgan. Don't mind about it. I know you meant to do the very best thing for me, and I'm so glad you're back that I can't think of anything else."

Pat gave her uncle's hand a quick, affectionate squeeze.

"You see, S. O. S.," said Carrington, grinning triumphantly, "it's all right, and I accomplished my purpose, for Patty's been doing a good business with the car, and I'll wager she had a mighty good time—didn't you, Patty?"

The girl nodded, smiling. Every faint cloud had vanished from her horizon.

"But go on with the story, Morgan," said Dr. Stafford. "You've only just begun. We'll concede your reason, or reasons—with a whimsical grin—for going. Now tell us the rest."

"Oh, there isn't much to tell," returned Carrington. "I phoned Marco as soon as I got into town. He'd been doing a lot of odd jobs for me ever since I retired, and I've kept him on the pay-roll."

"De boss, he give Marco big money all time since long, long while," broke in the smiling Italian. "Use work foreman for Missa Carrin'ton, 'way back w'en we bosc was young man, yes. We help each ozzer lot time, yes. He stood up for Marco w'en one big Mick wan' kill me one time. De boss rush in, he did, an' *thck!*—like dat he make big Mick roll on de groun'. Marco not t'ink he can do—he such lil man, de boss." He wagged his head in enjoyment of the remembrance. "He gotta what you calla grit, de boss has."

"Shut up, Marco!" said Carrington abruptly, though his voice was less gruff than usual. "They don't want to hear about that. You've paid that score off too many times to talk about it any more."

He turned back to the others.

"Marco wasn't exactly delighted with my plan, but he didn't know how to keep from helping me. We talked it over all the way up to the Carstairs Trust. By the way," he broke off, "I saw by the paper Marco brought over to-day that they've had to close, just as I expected."

Stafford leaned forward suddenly.

"Then you knew—"

"Yes, I knew that unprincipled villain, Baumgarten, was running the concern on the rocks. It was solid enough before he squeezed Lindsay Forsythe out of it. I

went to the bank before I left, and drew out the rest of my money and Ned Driscoll's. I didn't dare to take a chance on its failing while I was gone. I'd been taking it out gradually for more than a month, so as not to make more trouble than was necessary."

"So that was the reason you took all that money away with you, was it?" said Stafford in a relieved tone.

"Of course; but what did you know about that, Stuart?"

The doctor explained.

"Whew! That must have given you a bad quarter of an hour," exclaimed Carrington. "Must have looked as if I'd absconded with Ned's money. I never thought you'd have that to add to your troubles."

"Did you take all that money away with you, wherever you went?" asked the doctor.

"Lord, no! I just drove around the corner and deposited it in the Foresters' National, with Marco for bodyguard, as I did when I drew out the rest. Didn't like to carry any large sums of cash alone while all these daylight robberies were going on."

"So Marco was the strange man we've been looking for!" cried Stafford, and laughed unrestrainedly.

"Yes, Marco's been the god in the machine all through," said Carrington. "He got his brother, over back of Wilbour's Landing, where we were this evening, to take me in, and no questions asked. It was a good, handy place, and no one who knew me was likely to see me; though people would hardly have recognized me in this tasteful apparel that Marco selected for me at a department-store." He looked down at the rough suit that he was wearing. "I shaved my beard off, as that seems to be the disguise affected by most fugitives. Then Marco kept watch here, day and night, as well as he could, and reported to me. He spotted the colored woman who was bothering Sam and Lily pretty early in the game, and I made a guess that she had decorated the back door, thinking it was the kitchen entrance. Marco couldn't interfere without giving himself away, and he felt sure that you didn't know anything about it, further than the first warning. I knew, of course, that it couldn't have been intended for me or for any of us, but I was glad when I found out the whole status of the case."

"But, Morgan, somebody broke into the house while you were gone. Did Marco tell you, and have you any idea who it could have been?"

Carrington grinned a trifle sheepishly.

"That was one place where I really did bungle in a way that I'm ashamed of," he said. "Marco didn't want me to try it on, but I just had to have my old pipe."

He took it from his pocket and regarded it affectionately.

"Morgan!" ejaculated the doctor. "Do you mean to say that you broke into your own house in the dead of night for the sake of a pipe?"

"Oh, it wasn't so very late, and I didn't break in, for I had the front door key. I thought I could put my hand right on that pipe. When I found that it had been moved, I was so mad that I wouldn't have gone away without it if I'd had to give the whole show away. I would have stopped to put things back the way I found them, and no one would have been the wiser, if Lily hadn't set up that infernal racket. What was the matter with her, anyway?"

"Just a black cat which she thought was a 'hant,'" laughed Pat.

The whole thing seemed funny and jolly now that it was over, and she could see that John and the doctor were equally amused.

"One more question, Morgan," said Stafford. "I think I understand almost everything in this absurd situation, now, only I don't quite see why you took the trouble to go to Franklin Thornton and make an addition to your will."

"Well, Stuart, you certainly have been busy, haven't you?" laughed Carrington, slapping his friend's knee. "Who'd have thought that you'd ferret out all these side lines? I'm beginning to have almost a feeling of respect for you, old man. If ever I commit a serious crime, I'll be sure you aren't around. How did you come to get into touch with Thornton?"

"Had to have some advice. Didn't know what you were up to," smiled the doctor, "and wasn't taking chances on queering your game; so I went to Thornton. After deliberating and hemming and hawing till I thought I'd go mad, he told me of that last provision in your will, and I fail to see—"

"Why," said Carrington defensively, "I am thorough, you see—always was. When I set out to do a thing, I sort of want to

put it through. Accidents happen every day, and I didn't want anything to interfere with Patty's having a chance to try her wings. Life, especially at my age, is pretty uncertain, and if by any chance I'd gone out, you know, before she'd sorted things out for herself, I wanted to fix it so that there wouldn't be funds readily available. It was a remote contingency, of course, and I never thought the provision in the will would come to light unless something serious happened to me."

The doctor looked at his friend with admiration.

"Morgan," he said, "for a crazy man you certainly have a practical and far-seeing mind!"

They all laughed.

They went on talking for a long time after that. Carrington kept his attention pretty equally divided between John and Patty; and the longer he observed them, the more reconciled he became to the frustration of his plan for making a match between his niece and Ned Driscoll. A man was a fool who thought he could interfere with the romance of young hearts; and, quixotic as Morgan Carrington was, he was far from being a fool.

Marco had departed some time before, and at last, the hour being late, Carrington suggested that they should leave the doctor to his well-earned repose. There was a light in his eyes as he watched the two young people saying good night to Stuart Stafford. The manifest cordiality of their relationship pleased him more than he would have cared to show.

Those two had made good, it was perfectly obvious, with old S. O. S., and that fact, to Morgan Carrington, was the highest evidence of their worth and character. There was no one in the world whom he so greatly admired and loved and trusted as he did this old friend of his, though few would have guessed it from his normal brusk attitude.

"Patty," he said, "you and John Vanderpool go ahead and see if the coast is clear. I've talked so much to-night that my throat's sore, and I don't want to tell it all over again to your mother, my dear. If she's still up, hang out a red light and I'll wait."

Pat laughed, her old, rippling, care-free laugh.

"Good night, dear Dr. S. O. S.," she said, still clinging to his hand. "You've

been everything to John and me, and you needn't think, just because Uncle Morgan has come home, that I'm going to let you off. I'm going to bring all my special perplexities to you whenever they come up, and you're going to help me all through my life, just as you have been doing. You might just as well make up your mind to that, you poor dear!"

"I subscribe to all Pat says," said John, wringing the doctor's hand.

They slipped off together into the darkness. At the farthest edge of the light shining from the open door, the old men saw John put his arm about the slender white figure, and saw the girl lean a little toward him, raising her face to his.

"Two fine children, Morgan!" said Stafford softly, as they turned away. "Two fine, happy young things, with all the world before them and everything in it to insure a beautiful future!"

Carrington looked at him with a quizzical expression.

"I've made an awful ass of myself, Stuart, haven't I?" he said ruefully. "She's not going to need any profession, even if she had been able to jump into a really suitable one, with all the Vanderpool millions at her disposal. I haven't accomplished a blamed thing by my idiotic exploit, except that I've had a month of roughing it, working on Pietro's fruit farm all day and sleeping at night like the dead. I feel ten years younger."

"Well, you have accomplished one thing," said Stafford, with a whimsical side glance; "or rather it's accomplished itself without much help from you, so don't value yourself too highly on it."

"You mean—"

"Oh, I don't mean anything special. If you don't want me to. I'm just casually mentioning the fact that our young friend, John Vanderpool, has already made arrangements to give his prospective mother-in-law a happy, comfortable life—in North Carolina."

"And she's agreed?" questioned Carrington eagerly.

"She has, my boy; so don't flatter yourself that—"

"Thank God!" ejaculated Carrington fervently. "S. O. S., you know I was almost in a panic before I went away. I felt so helpless! When it comes to a stand-up fight, I'm not afraid of anybody alive, but that deadly, quiet, sweet, soft persistence—



oh, Lord! You're sure, now, that there isn't any danger?"

"You're as safe in your selfish old life as I am, Morgan," grinned the doctor; "and that's as safe as it's humanly possible to be."

Carrington grasped his hand.

"Thank you, S. O. S., thank you for those kind words—and for all the rest," he added with an unusual show of feeling. "If I hadn't been sure that Patty was in such good hands, I never would have left her. You're a brick, old man! I must say it, once in my life. Always steady at the wheel, and always there when any one wants help on any occasion, big or little; and I—oh, well, good night, S. O. S.!"

With another strong grip of the doctor's fingers, he vanished into the night.

Stafford listened to his departing footsteps, and then turned back into the house and closed the door. There was a smile on his kind old face.

"Have I really been of use to them?" he wondered as he slowly undressed. "I didn't do anything. I was just here—that was all. Those two dear children—God bless 'em, they'll be happy—and useful. Sure to be! What opportunities for them, with all their money! And they both see

it that way. To be of service in the world—a trust—"

He stood for a moment at the open window, looking out into the quiet night. His heart was full of happiness—the unselfish happiness of those who, some on wild seas, some on red battle-fields, some in the little, quiet corners of the earth, hold themselves ever in readiness to answer to the call of "S. O. S."

As he turned his face up to the calm and shining stars, he looked like the priest of an old and noble religion—of the divine religion of love and service.

"Happy hearts—youth and love," he murmured softly. "Like ours, Miss Mary! Good night, Miss Mary," he added, as he had every night since she left him, looking up through wind and storm, through snow and sleet, or, as now, through the calm, blue space of the sky.

He crept into bed. As he fell asleep, he was thinking:

"The tomatoes and peppers are doing well. We'll have a fine crop. Pat liked the pickles I made from old Mrs. Pomeroy's receipt. I must have some ready when they come back in the winter. Let me see—an ounce of mace, a quart of vinegar, a half-pound of sugar—"

THE END

### THE FORTUNATE VOYAGE

'Tis a brave craft we are sailing, dear,  
And the name of the craft is Love!  
The skipper's mate hath never a fear  
Of the blackest skies above;  
But she sits at the tiller and smiles at me  
In the teeth of the wildest gale.  
Only we two could sail this sea,  
Or throw up such a sail.

We laugh together,  
The dirtier the weather,  
As the seas come on us abeam;  
For the smoking foam  
To us is home,  
And the hurricane our dream!

And whatever the winds and the waves may do,  
The skies be black or the skies be blue,  
We shall make the port we are sailing to;  
For when two like us are sailing together,  
They have a friend in the wildest weather!

*Richard Le Gallienne*

# Logan Berry, from Oregon

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—THE STORY OF A YOUNG  
LOCHINVAR WHO CAME OUT OF THE WEST

By John D. Swain

Author of "Billy Kane—White and Unmarried," etc.

**Y**OUNG Logan Berry came out of the West. The Berrys have taken root in many soils. They are wanderers, adventurers, always ready to pack a scrip or kit-bag and go to any place that beckons or promises. In France they have been known as De Berri, or Du Barry. As Irishmen, they are Barrys—two-fisted men, with big batting averages. In England they are plain Berrys—no easy picking.

Logan's paternal ancestor arrived on the second trip of the Mayflower, and his son pushed on to the Far West—which was Albany. As the Berrys were ever in the thin front line of pioneers, and finally reached the Pacific, it came about that Logan was born where the salmon hurl themselves in gleaming red and silver from the sea.

Scarcely less enterprising, the Logans—his mother's folk—had been circling the globe in the opposite direction. A factor in the East India Company, an officer in Chinese Gordon's army, an explorer in unknown Tibet, then across the Pacific to hunt nuggets along the Yukon, the last of them was the father of Logan Berry's Oregon-born mother.

So East met West, Logan met Berry, and the result was young Logan Berry. Then, as if the leisurely purpose of the centuries had been accomplished, his parents were carried off by the influenza when he was a schoolboy of fourteen years. They left him a fine family tree and a trifle less than a thousand dollars a year—of which his only living relative, Amos Berry, of Hemlock, Massachusetts, was made trustee.

Thus it was that young Logan Berry came out—or rather was yanked out—of the West. He didn't in the least want to come, and never changed his mind from the day when his taciturn uncle—who was real-

ly a cousin far removed—met him at the Pittsfield station and drove him in a buckboard for fifteen miles over the hills to the sleepy hamlet where he lived.

"How be ye?" Amos said, as the boy stepped from his Boston and Albany coach. "Wall, here we be!" he added, some three hours later, when the mare turned of her own accord into his weedy yard. This was his share of the small talk.

"Pretty well, thank you, sir," Logan replied to the first remark, and just nothing at all to the second.

It will be suspected that the last of the Berrys were not chatterboxes.

There followed a few years of drab existence and constant drudgery. The boy labored incessantly on Amos's sterile acres, hoeing corn and potatoes, weeding onions, doing the petty chores of a one-horse farm.

They took turns cooking, living mostly on the products of the place—milk, eggs, vegetables, salt pork. Bread they bought—never cake or pie—from a wagon; butter, tea, and sugar from the one store in Hemlock. Occasionally one of them caught a mess of trout in the spring, or pickerel in winter, or catfish at almost any season. Once in a dog's age Amos decapitated a fowl past the egg-laying age.

The old man retired before nine o'clock every night, and rose by starlight. He read aloud a chapter from the Bible every morning after breakfast, and thereafter held his peace. At the end of two years, young Logan had no more idea of what Amos Berry thought—if he did think—than on the day when the boy stepped into his buckboard. He never complained, swore, or laughed. He did not even snore. He worked all his "critters" hard, but no harder than he toiled himself. He fed

them austere—as he himself ate. He went to meeting every Sunday, whatever the weather, and seemed to derive no comfort therefrom. He gave young Logan a big four-poster bed with a huge feather mattress and real linen sheets, yellow with age, but he never paid the lad a dollar in wages. He made no account of holidays but Fast Day and the local cattle show.

Since Amos Berry is not the villain of this tale, and presently disappears from it—as indeed he would wish to do—let us pause to do him justice, and pass on.

He had never heard of young Logan until he was notified that he had been made the boy's trustee. He had heard of, but never seen, Logan's father. His entire life had been spent in wrenching a bare subsistence from run-out and worked-over soil on a rocky hillside. It gave him no pleasure to receive a stranger into his bare home. He would not shirk his duty; but neither would he feign elation.

Yet he was almost ruthlessly honest. Had Logan proved to be a dead weight, he would not have set up any claim against the boy's patrimony for bed and board. When he proved to be a tireless worker and as taciturn as himself, old Amos was pleased, but totally unable, from old inhibitions, to register pleasure.

On the day when Logan became eighteen, Amos announced to him, in not more than a score of words, that henceforth he was his own master, and could go to the Berkshire National Bank in Pittsfield and draw all or any part of his twenty-thousand-dollar heritage. He did not add any shrewd advice or warnings, nor did he try to borrow any part of the money. Nor was a word passed as to whether the boy might continue to remain in voluntary penance, or not.

The bank-book was handed to Logan across a soggy mess of boiled salt pork and dandelions. He pocketed it and made what was probably the longest speech heard in the Berry homestead since the funeral of Amos's mother, forty years before.

"I thank you, Uncle Amos. You have been square with me, and I'll always be square with you."

"Huh!" grunted the old man.

If he had intended to say more, it was buried under a knife-load of greasy dandelion greens.

Naturally, Logan Berry had come in contact with other young folk during school

terms. Unhappily, his social life was not brightened by them.

He was a "foreigner" to the Hemlock juveniles, to whom even one from across the State line of New York or Vermont was exotic. They jeered at his reverent care for the letter "r," which they unanimously ignored save as an initial. The little idiomatic breaks which set him off from them, they never overlooked. He was "different." A certain calm assurance on his part was held to prove that he was "stuck up." The result was to drive him still deeper into the thicket of his taciturnity.

Then, too, he was clumsy at the sports indigenous to Hemlock. He could not even master such crude baseball as the Hemlock school played, with five or six lads to a "nine." He knew nothing of the lore of New England small game, or the place and season to find the best high-bush blueberries, the secretive beechnuts, the first sweet Mayflowers to hang on the girls' door-latches after dark.

He was a pariah, perpetually homesick for the land of big things. The Berkshires looked pretty enough to him, but flat. The Hemlockers spoke of rivers where Oregon would have said brooks. Everything seemed petty to this boy, once a worshiper of the snow-capped ranges in whose torrents leaped mighty fishes which would have strangled in the shallow rills of Hemlock. And they boasted of their apples—these Yankees!

Thrust back upon himself, he read a good deal. There was no public library in Hemlock, there were no private ones; but there was in Amos Berry's sitting-room, in a great walnut case, a strangely assorted lot of books thick with dust, despite the glass doors so long closed. There were old sermons, from some clerical Berry of early days. There were the speeches of Webster, Lincoln, Garrison, Beecher. "Robinson Crusoe" was there, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Fox's "Martyrs," Abbott's histories, one volume of Ranke's "History of the Popes," and, miraculously enough, Melville's "Moby Dick" and Borrow's "Lavengro." He read them all. He did more—he absorbed them into his blood and marrow, and, since he spoke but little, into his very mode of thought.

In his nineteenth year Logan Berry was a clean-looking lad of medium height, who would not have attracted a second glance from any one. He had lived four years in

Hemlock, and not one of the natives suspected that there was anything unusual about him. Even Amos, for instance, did not realize the lad's extraordinary strength. There was little to show it, unless it was that he had unusually large hands and thick, round wrists. Stripped, he looked amazingly like that other big-handed boy, the "David" of Michelangelo, as the virile sculptor conceived the slayer of Goliath.

Logan had ceased to participate in games with the village lads. One or two of them remembered some early occasion when, in his careless grasp, there had been a hint of incredible power—that was all. Even a trainer, unless he were keener-eyed than most, would have passed by this lad had he presented himself as candidate for a college crew or football team.

Yet Logan Berry could have snapped the straightest-grained oar ever made—which, after all, is not what is demanded of an oarsman. With but three fingers on the strongest runner of the Yale or Harvard team, he could have brought him down; but Logan did not know this himself, and it could not be guessed from his rather slight figure, his lean limbs with very long, flat, but by no means impressive muscles.

It was an inheritance from both sides of the house. Grandfather Berry had won renown "kissing the sledge" and bending horseshoes. His mother's grandfather had bent half-crowns double. Logan could do more—he could have broken one in two with a sudden snap. He had never done so, however. He never knew how much he could lift, either; because he never had tried to move anything that proved too heavy.

There was another characteristic, at once more subtle and more important, in the boy's make-up. He was without fear—fear of any one or anything. He did not fear men, whether they sought to create terror by loudly bawled threat or by hissing sinister promise through the corner of thin, cruel lips. He did not fear lightning, or ghosts, or mad dogs.

Far stranger, he did not fear the velvet malice of pretty women. He had never suffered that agony of adolescence, the sensation that all eyes are glued in mockery upon one as he enters a crowded room. He never wondered what to do with his hands and feet, or prayed for death upon discovering a truant button or a twisted cravat. He had not as yet been spoken to kindly

by a millionaire, a chorus-lady, or a big-league pitcher; but had he been, it would not have occurred to him to treasure the experience.

In all this there was not a touch of arrogance, brazenness, or "freshness." Without even realizing that he thought so, young Logan Berry considered himself the equal of any one alive, and vastly superior to any one dead. This was his real inheritance, handed down from the Du Barrys who had bullied kings and the Barrys whose motto had been: "The bigger they are, the harder they fall." It was the spirit of that long, persistent, valiant line of sun-baked colonels, ice-defying explorers, voyagers to new horizons, and givers of odds, which had strangely culminated in a solitary, ingrowing lad of nineteen toiling upon the rocky soil of a Berkshire farm day after day, year after year, with no respite save to exchange the thin-bladed hoe of summer for the thick-bladed ax of winter.

## II

THAT a thousand years of reckless courage—sometimes remorseless and always indomitable—stirred in his blood, Logan Berry was of course unaware. Nor had he ever heard of repressed complexes, and the devious manners in which they seek expression. There was no hint of them in a sermon of Parson Berry's which he had often read—"A Discourse on Predestination and Free Will with Regard to Future Punishment."

Of course he found some solace in reading, as all young folks do. It was not *Crusoe*, but Logan, who came upon that naked footprint in the sand which has been called the high mark of fictional crisis. It was Logan who rescued the banker's beautiful daughter from unwashed and irreligious kidnapers, and who later married her and received as a wedding gift a brownstone home with primitive plumbing. He practised fantasy and projection without being aware that he did so; but he had never fallen in love with any of the Hemlock lassies, though deeply enamored of several insipid "females" depicted by Fenimore Cooper. He had, moreover, his own peculiar and secret method of escaping from the hideous monotony which he accepted without conscious protest.

The house of Amos Berry stood near the main highway, and on a slightly lower level, since the road had been raised when



macadamized. Mighty lilac-trees—they had passed the stage of mere bushes—concealed the weather-stained, century-and-a-half-old building from passers-by. There were road-houses a few miles above and below, and an increasing stream of automobiles whirled through sleepy Hemlock every day, and especially every night.

By day, sweating in the fields, the boy scarcely even lifted his head to look at the great cars that shot past; but as he lay awake at night, smothered in his vast feather bed, it was different. He could not see the cars, even when the moon was brightest, because of the lilac hedge; but he could hear them.

There would be absolute silence, only heightened by the little voices of the night—the dreary dialogue of tree-toads, the chirp of crickets, the far-away insistence of whippoorwills or whimpering owls in the alder swamp. Then would come a glittering knife of light cutting the lilac tops; and—because Logan's window was below the road level—the illusion of shrill cries, shrieks of laughter, hoarse repartee sweeping through the sky as witches used to ride their brooms. All this was over in a few seconds, to be repeated again and again.

He knew that at the very worst it was probably nothing but a party of harum-scarums returning from some road-house after dining and dancing there, and possibly registering a protest against the Volstead Law. He had seen these same people by day—ordinary people enough, some pretty girls, more fat matrons, now and then a distinguished youth in tweeds, or more often a prosperous plumber, doing the Mohawk Trail. But alone in his attic, in the dark, with a little mouse gnawing at the same mighty joist that its ancestors had gnawed at in vain, he shuddered as Parson Berry must have shuddered when he read of the Salem witchcraft.

It was not a silly girl whose voice spun like a fine wire across the boy's open window, but the tongue of sin itself. It was not laughter, but the desperate defiance of lost souls. It was not the old mill they were bound for, but hell!

He shivered in his feather bed, yet he longed to make a fine gesture to God Almighty and cast in his lot with these damned souls, just for one night! Always, after this impious thought, he got out of bed, knelt beside it, and pattered a frightened prayer; but the wish recurred. It

was then, and never when he worked under the hot sun, that he hated life in Hemlock.

There was another little way in which he sought release. There was a traveling salesman who visited the town occasionally, and who had once stopped at the Berrys for a glass of water.

Logan had noticed his clothes. He knew, without knowing how he knew, that the stranger was well rather than flashily dressed. He had followed him out to his waiting flivver.

"If it isn't too much trouble, I wish you'd get me some clothes," he said.

"What's that—clothes? My line is—" began the surprised salesman.

"I know," interrupted Logan; "but, you see, I never go to the city, and I don't like the looks of the pictures in the mail-order catalogues. They're dinky stuff!"

The drummer looked at him keenly.

"I get you, son—swell, but quiet. Is that it?"

"I guess so," agreed Logan Berry.

"About what do you want?"

"A suit of clothes, shoes, shirt, necktie, hat, collar, everything—even gloves."

The older man took a few measurements with a tape that Logan fished from a pocket, whistled softly over the bigness of the youth's hands and the smallness of his feet, and climbed into his car.

"I'll pay you now, if you want me to," Logan said.

"Not a bit of it, son! I'm a pretty fair judge of credit as well as salesman. Have to be!"

He waved a cheerful hand and rolled away.

A week later the stage dropped a big box at the Berry home. Amos asked no questions about its contents, and Logan never offered any explanations. He took the box to his attic and unpacked the contents with the tremulous eagerness of a bride over her wedding gifts.

He found a dark brown sack suit, miraculously folded; two shirts, one white, the other an unobtrusive brown stripe; black oxfords with just a broguish touch to them, socks to match, a mahogany-toned four-in-hand, and a brown Stetson so velvety soft that it was a joy to caress it.

Slowly and luxuriously he arrayed himself, finishing by clapping on the soft brown hat at a slight angle. From the breast pocket of his coat a handkerchief peeped just enough to show its brown border. This

was the one point where the salesman had overdone the matter in his zeal for harmony; but the whole effect was excellent. There were no flutings, pleats, belts, meretricious paddings, superfluous buttons; nothing cheaply form-fitting about the rich, plainly tailored cloth. Everything fitted, even to the heavy cape gloves, size eight and three-quarters.

The village was never gladdened by a view of the new costume. Logan never wore it in public—not even to church. At intervals he arrayed himself in the privacy of his attic, walking back and forth in front of his inadequate mirror. At such times it is possible that the dry dust of departed Berrys who had been beaux and gallants rustled with satisfaction in their distant tombs.

A fortnight later the salesman drew up before the house, and Logan paid him and thanked him.

"Let's see 'em on, kid," he urged.

The boy hesitated. Amos had driven over to a distant farm to look at some shoats.

"All right! Wait a minute."

Ten minutes later he came down from his attic. The salesman appraised him from interested and surprised eyes.

"Gee, kid—you're certainly the class! If you ever hit the big town, you'll knock 'em for a home-run!"

He made Logan turn around, walk, stand; took him in profile and full front. He saw a slender, erect youth with good features, steady blue-gray eyes set well apart, brown hair sun-bleached over a good forehead. The face was a bit too serious about the mouth and chin, perhaps, but undeniably attractive.

"When you get fed up on the corn-patch, you can go anywhere in that scenery and look the part," he told young Berry.

They shook hands on parting, and Logan unconsciously put more gratitude into his grip than he intended to. The salesman emitted a piercing yell. As his hand was released, he shook it limply while he danced up and down.

"Those knuckles are telescoped!" he wailed. "Where on earth do you get it?"

He felt each finger as if expecting to find it broken. Then, with the other hand, he touched Logan's biceps and forearm.

"Don't notice anything unusual in your muscles," he mused; "but you sure got a grip like a chiropractor!"

He rode away, still glancing apprehensively at his right hand, as if he feared to see it drop off at the wrist.

It was a week later that Logan, patiently yet viciously pecking away with his hoe, became aware that something had gone wrong with a car in the road a couple of hundred yards away. He paused, removed his wide-brimmed straw, and with the back of his hand wiped the stinging sweat from his eyes.

A touring-car was standing well to one side of the highway. It had a yellow body, with solid black wheels—a swagger conveyance, long, low-hung, with a small French hood over the rear. About it hovered four people—two young men and a couple of girls dressed one jump ahead of the prevailing mode.

One of the men removed his hat and scratched his head—the universal gesture of uncertainty. Then both went to the near-by fence, selected a stout rail, placed it over a large rock as fulcrum, and attempted to pry up the car. They desisted after a moment, and stood looking helplessly up and down the road. The two girls teetered about on their high heels, gingerly plucking such wild flowers as grew in the ditch.

Logan dropped his hoe, replaced his straw sunshade, and crossed over to the fence. He then saw that the off front wheel of the car had sunk to the hub-cap into a little culvert, so full of rank weeds that it had not been visible from the car as it was swung too widely in passing another vehicle.

The young men, flashily dressed and of Hebraic type, looked up at the figure leaning on the fence. Logan looked back at them. Then he clambered over and came down to the stalled car without a word. He squatted beside it for a moment, then gripped the solid wheel in his big hands, so calloused on the palms that his grasp was like that of a Stillson wrench.

For a moment he squatted there, motionless. The veins stood out on his forehead and along his thick wrists. His heavy, dirty brogans bit into the sod. Then the car rose suddenly, the wheel was wrenched from the culvert and set down just over the edge. Rising, Logan Berry again removed his hat and wiped his forehead.

"Well, I'll be damned!" cried one of the men. "Look here, Lil! See what this bird has done!"

"Say, feller, do you know what you lifted then?" the other man asked, while the two girls paused in their botanizing and looked up.

"An automobile," said Logan.

"You said it! An easy thousand pounds you lifted fifteen inches!"

"Why so statistical, Monty?" drawled the prettier of the girls.

"Because it's a freak lift, if you ask me. What Lou and I couldn't budge with a lever, he picks up in his bare hands like it was a basket of eggs."

"Oh, well!" the other girl commented.

"Hard work was never your specialty."

Monty's hand made a gesture toward his pocket.

"You've done us a great turn, mister. How much do we owe you?"

"Nothing," said Logan.

Lou, in turn, indicated one of his pockets.

"A little hoot, then?"

"No—too hot."

"Well," persisted Monty, "you can't blame it onto us. If there's anything we can do to square ourselves, give it a name. That's me!"

Logan stood motionless for a full minute. The others waited in silence, the girls rather bored. There was nothing about this soiled, sweaty figure, clad in patched and faded garments, to interest them.

"I'll tell you," the scarecrow said at last. "If you are willing to take me along to the city with you, and will give me ten minutes to change my clothes—"

"What city?" interrupted Lou.

"Any city."

"Want to shake the old homestead for a while, huh?"

"Forever," said Logan Berry.

The girls glanced at him with a little more interest then, but found nothing to comment on except his steady eyes.

"Go to it, son! You look to be of age. I guess we can't be framed for kidnaping."

Logan nodded and turned toward the house. He walked slowly, and did not glance back; but once inside, his actions became amazingly swift.

He was alone. Amos had taken a calf over to the Hemlock butcher. Logan tore off his clothes as one peeling old paper from a wall. He dragged out a wooden tub and filled it from the pump. A big carriage sponge hung over the sink, a bar of yellow soap stood in a china dish. In three minutes he was scrubbed from head to foot.

He emptied the tub and set it outside to dry, draping the wet towel over it. Then, naked as he was, he sped up-stairs to his attic.

No leisurely arraying of himself now! He had donned the wonderful brown costume so many times that he was able to work two-handed, without loss of time. With something of his stipulated ten minutes to spare, he stood complete, the brown-bordered handkerchief peeping from his breast pocket, his gloves thrust in another, his soft brown hat set at its most effective angle.

For a moment he hesitated as to what to pack up in his shabby hand-bag—the one he had brought from Oregon nearly five years before. Then he decided to take nothing that would not go into his pockets. He possessed nothing of any value, except the clothes he stood in. There were teeth missing from his comb, bristles from his brushes. He would buy new ones in the city. His underwear was coarse and even ragged.

He rolled his spare shirt into a ball and stuffed it into one coat pocket; a pair of socks and two handkerchiefs went into the other. His bank-book he buttoned up in his inside waistcoat pocket. His loose cash—all there was left after paying for his symphony in brown—amounted to a trifle less than five dollars.

Thirty seconds later he stood by the kitchen table, scribbling a line on a piece of brown wrapping-paper.

I'm going away. Good-by.—L. B.

Amos would find this on his return. Logan knew that were his uncle present, their farewell would be as terse and impersonal as his note. In due time he would be missed in the village, and some one would ask about him. Then, but not before, Amos would say that he had been gone some time.

A spruce, good-looking young stranger paused beside the car in which lounged four young people idly bantering one another in the latest alleged Broadway idiom. He attracted the attention of Lil at once. She nudged her companion.

"What's on your mind, feller?" asked Monty.

"I'm all ready to go," said the stranger.

Then, to their stupefaction, they recognized him, principally by his voice.

"Can you beat it?" squealed Lil.

"Looks like the missing heir," Peggy declared. "Here, get in with me!"

"Not so you'd notice it! I saw him first!" Lil protested.

They disputed playfully about him, Logan meanwhile waiting unconcernedly. In the end Peggy agreed to sit with Lou, who was driving, while Logan and Monty remained in the rear, with Lil between them.

As they rolled smoothly away, Logan Berry cast not so much as one backward glance at the only home he had known since boyhood.

### III

To enter Holyoke from the main western turnpike you have to pass the Stagger Inn—unless you stop there. Lou swung his yellow car beneath a poplar-tree at one side, just as the candles were being lighted within.

The afternoon ride had not been hilarious. After the first surprise at beholding Logan Berry in garments in which even their cheaply fastidious eyes could find no fault other than a little ultra-conservatism, they had tried to draw him out—without success. They finally laid his unresponsiveness to rustic shyness; and after kidding him in a harmless and good-natured way for several miles, they let him alone.

Logan was not in the least degree abashed or ill at ease. He was comparing the quartet with the vivid pictures his imagination had painted when he lay in his attic bed, hearing just such silly laughter and inane badinage float through the night over the hedge of lilacs. He recognized these people for just what they were—heedless, superficial pleasure-seekers, but kindly at heart, and harmless. He was reticent because he didn't speak their language, and because, while in years he was the youngest, he was actually far more mature than Monty, who was close to thirty.

The party was bound for Springfield; but as their silent fare had admitted that it made no difference to him what city he went to, Lou made a detour in order to drop him off at Holyoke, and thus be rid of a dead weight. He stopped now before a resort well known to them all, partly from habit, and more because it had been a long time between drinks.

"Ever stop at this road-house, kid?" he asked, turning in his seat.

"I never was in any," said Logan; "and never in a hotel but once."

"Clamber down, then," said Lou good-naturedly, "and we'll go see the animals feed."

He fastened the switch-lock, and then led the party within, being greeted as an old acquaintance at the door by a stocky French Canuck with a thick, glossy black mustache.

"Haven't been raided yet, I see, Pete!" he flung at their host as they passed.

The proprietor grinned, displaying admirable teeth, and showed them to a table in the single large room which occupied all of the ground floor.

The Stagger Inn was not much of a place of entertainment. It was too near the city to appeal to the "exclusive" trade. A rough element, coming out by trolley, or even afoot, crowded it uncomfortably every night a little later on. Up-stairs was a nest of grimy little private dining-rooms. A piano furnished alleged music for those who chose to dance below.

No liquor was sold here; but a majority of the patrons brought various concoctions with them, and, so long as they were not too open about it, no objections were raised. The place was reputed to enjoy protection. It had at least escaped raiding, so far.

Monty promptly ordered ginger ale all round. When it was brought, along with particularly tall glasses, he produced a leather-covered flask and poured a good stiffener into each girl's tonic, before gesturing toward Logan's.

"None for me, thanks!"

Relief registered in Monty's face. Poor as it was, the stuff was none too easy to get, and every little teetotaler helped.

"Suit yourself, kid!" he said, and doctored his own glass, and Lou's.

Logan amused himself by watching what was, for him, a novel sight. The rather dingy room was about half-filled with nondescript characters. Most of them were of the same type as Lou's party. There were a few juvenile mill-hands from near-by Holyoke, and in one corner sat a little group of Pete's half-breed cronies. There were perhaps half a dozen of a somewhat higher type, evidently present as a lark.

A few couples moved languidly in the space reserved for dancing. It was too early for the place to liven up much. None of Lou's party evinced the slightest interest in any one but themselves.

The four rose to dance after they had



finished their high-balls. Peggy politely asked Logan, and learned that he had never tried—which did not surprise her. They drifted away, leaving him quite content to look on and listen.

A girl who had been sitting alone at a side table rose with a sort of reptilian grace and crossed over to his table, slinking into the chair just vacated by Peggy.

"'Lo, kid!" she greeted in a throaty croon, without removing the cigaret from her red lips.

"Hello!" responded Logan, looking at her with frank curiosity.

He had never seen any one at all like her, with her rather pretty, discontented face, thickly powdered, and her large dark eyes made still larger and darker by the crude use of a drug-store cosmetic kit. She had a thin neck, a concave chest, and the general proportions of an eel, enhanced by clinging black lace. She was generous in her revelation of collar-bones, shoulder-blades, and even ribs. Her hands were claw-like, terminating in nicotin-stained, highly manicured fingers.

She returned his gaze blandly.

"Buy me a shot," she suggested.

"Certainly. What do you prefer?" he asked, catching the eye of a shabby waiter.

"Oh, ginger goes as good with it as anything," she hinted, tilting back her head and expelling twin smoke streams from her nostrils.

Logan ordered and paid for the tonic, rather surprised to learn that it cost fifty cents.

"Well, how about it?" she asked after a moment.

"About what?"

"The hooch—the kick."

She made an expressive gesture of one pouring something into her glass.

"Oh, I see! I haven't any. My friend has some, though."

The girl shrugged her bony shoulders resignedly.

"I get you! Well, he's got a jane with him, and they're comin' back. I'll fade." She rose, or rather writhed, out of her chair. "No hard feelings," she grinned back at him.

She left her tonic untouched on the table.

"Oh, naughty, naughty!" chirped Lil, patting Logan's arm, as she seated herself. "Can't we trust you alone two minutes?"

She glanced at the untouched ginger ale, then at Peggy, and both laughed.

Logan's attention was elsewhere. Near by sat a couple so unlike the other patrons of the place that he had been unable to keep his eyes from wandering even while the strange girl was talking to him.

The girl was a pretty brunette, and alone of the women in the room was without the aid of paint or jewelry. She was simply but faultlessly dressed, and over her chair-back was flung a light but rich crumple of fur. She seemed faintly amused, yet uneasy. Her escort—a slender, languid-looking young man with just enough chin to furnish support for his small, even teeth—was dressed very much as Logan himself was, but a trifle more so. It was plain, even to young Berry, that the couple had visited the Stagger Inn as strangers, unaccustomed to its free and easy ways.

Monty noticed his preoccupation.

"That's Corinne Ashley," he mumbled. "Her old man owns a big paper-mill here. His income tax is more 'n the President's salary. Young swell with her is Darlington Hawes. 'Dolly,' they call him. He's got a nice mess of Liberty bonds himself."

"That sable automobile throw set her back five thou'," guessed Lil.

"What of it?" Lou came back. "Ashley will make us pay a cent a box more for our stationery, and he'll still be ahead of the game!"

While they were talking, a striking figure rose from Pete's table and made its way toward the couple. A full inch over six feet in height, and with tremendous shoulders, his growing waist-line was not yet conspicuous beneath a superb chest. His face was less admirable. The eyes were too small and too glittering. Numerous scars disfigured a skin that was mottled and swarthy, beneath a shock of black hair with here and there a streak of gray.

His thick lips moved constantly, and his big, knobby hands opened and shut. Despite his bulk, he moved with a sort of springy lightness. Logan was fascinated by the crude virility of the man.

"Tom Conner, the big boss," Monty whispered. "What he says goes, in Holyoke or Chicopee. Friend o' Pete's here. That's why the joint is never pulled."

The big man, licking his lips, indifferent to the glances that followed him as he crossed the room, came to the table where the Ashley girl sat, and leaned familiarly over her, placing a great hairy hand on the back of her chair.

"How 'bout a spiel, honey?" he asked in a horse rumble that carried easily to Logan's ears.

The girl shrank forward, away from that huge hand, and glanced instinctively at her escort.

"No, thank you!"

Logan could not hear her words, but it was easy to guess them.

The big boss was not discouraged. He grinned amiably, showing large yellow teeth.

"Aw, come on! Show a bit of speed! We're only young once. I'm primed just right for the cellar slide. What say?"

Dolly Hawes, a good deal whiter than the girl in his charge, made a feeble rally to rise to the measure of an escort.

"I say, my good fellow," he said in a precise, rather high-pitched voice, "the lady does not wish to dance with you. You are annoying her!"

Tom Conner turned slowly, his malignant eyes passing insultingly over the little man, as if he were stripping his clothes off, garment by garment.

"Is that so?" he sneered. "Who asked you to butt in? I'm talkin' to this kid. You lay off—get me?"

Logan's eyes, wandering to the table in the corner, caught the grinning face of Pete, who, like every one else, was watching the affair with interest. The boy turned to Monty.

"Why doesn't some one stop him?" he asked wonderingly. "Why doesn't the proprietor interfere?"

"Didn't I just wise you up that Tom Conner protects him from getting raided? Besides, who's going to argue with that baby? He's the big noise in these woods, and there was a time when he was a pretty nifty light-heavy. He's a bad actor when he gets started—and it's awful easy to start him!"

Logan turned impatiently, and saw Dolly Hawes rising. His affected tones were shrill with nervousness.

"This is intolerable!" he was saying. "I'll go and get the traffic officer on the corner below!"

To Logan's astonishment, he minced out of the room, leaving Corinne Ashley alone with her persecutor. Tom Conner laughed scornfully.

"That lets him out! Now we can get acquainted," he said.

Logan rose quietly.

"Somebody's got to stop that fellow," he declared.

Lil and Monty laid hands on him.

"Forget it, kid! That bird wouldn't make one mouthful of you. He ain't an automobile you can lift by main strength, you know!"

Logan freed himself impatiently, scarcely aware of what they were saying. He walked across the fifteen or twenty feet intervening, and touched the big man lightly on the shoulder. Conner whirled around with surprising quickness.

"You are disturbing this young lady," Logan said, gravely and almost dispassionately. "You must let her alone, and go back to your table."

Tom Conner grinned with ferocious joy. He much preferred to fight than to dance, and in the figure before him he thought that he saw merely a replica of Dolly Hawes.

"Where the hell do you get off?" he snarled.

"I don't get off—I'm just coming in."

"Guess again, bo! You're goin' out!"

With the words, Conner lunged at him with his left arm. He had been drinking just enough to have lost his eye for distance, while retaining all his strength and cunning. Thus it was that the blow, aimed for Logan's jaw, caught him on one shoulder, spinning him completely around and seating him jarringly on the dirty floor.

The boy had never been struck before, and surprise held him there for a moment. His shoulder stung with the impact, and he was a little dizzy. He rose carefully to his feet. Then, to the amazement of everybody there, and to the real concern of his friends at the other table, instead of retreating in good order he moved toward Conner.

Conner himself was surprised. There was nothing menacing about the boy. His face was as placid as a child's; yet he was certainly moving in the wrong direction. The big man threw himself into the old familiar posture, left arm well out, right held back.

Logan knew that he must avoid those fists. If they landed in the right place, he would be knocked half-way across the room, and never know how he got there! He put out his own hands, cautiously, but with his long, sinewy fingers spread.

Conner thrust forward his left hand for a feint, and Logan's fingers seized it about

the wrist. The arm was jerked back, lifting the man from his feet and dragging him in; and then Logan caught the other wrist and held it.

Conner put forth his full strength to break free. Though not in the best of condition, he was as good a man as he ever had been, until winded; but in the appalling clutch of this slender youth, it was as if a strait-jacket had him. Logan contented himself with merely holding on to his assailant's right hand; but, leaning over to one side to bring his weight into play, he began to twist that dangerous left of the ex-pugilist, as one might turn a giant screw-driver.

The big fellow redoubled his struggles, his face contorted with pain. In his efforts to seek relief he leaned far back, applying the full weight of his great shoulders; but inch by inch his forearm turned to the right. The impotent hand, which had been caught palm down, was now turned two-thirds around.

They struggled in silence; and save for smothered monosyllables, the guests of the Stagger Inn were silent, too. The crunching snap that marked the end was heard distinctly through the room.

Tom Conner's arm went limp and loose, like the branch of a tree which has been twisted off. His white lips parted for a single piercing shriek of pain. Then he slipped to the floor in a dead faint.

Logan Berry turned to the girl who had been watching with staring and horror-troubled eyes.

"Wouldn't you like to go outside and find your friend?"

Corinne Ashley rose.

"I'd prefer to have you take me home, if you will be so good," she said.

He nodded, and they walked quietly toward the door. He paused at Monty's table to get his hat from beneath his chair, and to speak a word of farewell.

"She wants me to see her home," he explained simply. "Please excuse me leaving you this way. I'm very much obliged for your kindness."

The men rose awkwardly.

"Go to it, kid!" Lou muttered.

Peggy looked after him a little wistfully, as if she had discovered—too late—that he possessed real qualities.

"He gets me," she confessed after he had gone. "I don't make him a-tall!"

They turned their attention to Tom Con-

ner. The ex-pugilist was being revived by a sporty young physician who chanced to be present.

"Wing twisted clean off, tendons and all," he announced cheerfully. "Ball-and-socket joint at the elbow, you know. Be months before he can use it, and it will always be stiff."

Outside, Corinne Ashley led the way to a neat little roadster, her special property.

"Do you drive?" she asked.

Logan shook his head.

"I was never in a car until to-day," he admitted.

The girl nodded, and took her place at the wheel.

"Aren't you going to wait for—for Mr. Hawes?"

"I am not," she curtly replied, one slender foot pressing the starter.

There is nothing that angers a woman more than to have her chosen escort display physical cowardice. She knew that had Dolly Hawes attempted force with that hideous character in the Stagger Inn, he would have been a total loss. She was not at all sure what it was that she wanted him to do; but she could not forgive his desertion of her, to seek the aid of another man, even though a policeman.

The fact that Hawes had protested against bringing her here made her all the more bitter—as it invariably does when one knows that one is at fault.

She did not know just what it was that this young stranger had accomplished; but without any fuss, or noise, or brutal fist-cuffs, he had managed to quell the formidable Conner. She glanced furtively at him, wondering how he did it. He looked no larger than Dolly.

Of course, she did not need Logan's company any longer. It was only the edge of the evening, and she often drove alone much later than this; but she wished to inflict this final and cruel blow upon young Mr. Hawes. Then, too, her curiosity was roused!

Corinne's roadster was one of the speediest makes, but she contented herself with a fifteen-mile pace. Also, she chose a roundabout way which added miles to their journey; but this, of course, Logan did not know.

He was serenely happy, huddled down by her side with the cool Berkshire twilight encompassing them, the scent of roses in the air. On the byways that Corinne

selected they met nothing, except an occasional nocturnal moth attracted by their dimmed headlight. It was so much nicer, so much cleaner-smelling, than the smoky air of the Stagger Inn! Logan didn't believe he would ever care to go to a road-house again.

"Of course you must know that I'm terribly grateful," the girl murmured, her eyes steady on the road ahead; "but I don't see how on earth you did it. He looked so big and savage!"

"I guess I must have twisted his arm out of its socket. You see, I really didn't dare let go."

"Didn't dare?" she repeated doubtfully.

"Well, you saw what happened when he just struck me a glancing blow on the shoulder! If he had hit me fairly on the head, I wouldn't have been able to help you any."

"You don't look anywhere near as strong as he," she persisted. "I shouldn't have thought you any stronger than Dolly—Mr. Hawes."

"Well, you see, for years I've hoed corn, and chopped wood, and gone early to bed. Probably it's made me healthy."

Corinne's dark eyes gave him a swift sidelong glance.

"I can't believe that," she asserted.

"But it's true! I've lived on a little farm at Hemlock ever since I was fourteen. In all that time I've never been five miles away from the corn-field."

"Hemlock? You lived there?"

"Not right in the village, but just outside of it."

Hemlock! She recalled it as a handful of little farms and a post-office, a milestone on the Mohawk Trail. Fancy living in such a place!

She reviewed the details of Logan's quiet, perfectly correct clothes, his aplomb, his brief sentences free from any suspicion of rustic dialect. His hands alone bore out his claim. They were clean, but with calloused palms and broken nails. There was some mystery here, she thought; and it needed only this, added to his modest heroism, to lift him very high indeed in her eyes.

She was sorry when the red-tiled roofs of her house appeared. She brought the roadster to a pause before the garage at the side entrance, and gave him her hand, with a friendly pressure.

"You must dine with us to-morrow,"

she commanded. "Papa and mama will want to thank you."

"I don't want to be thanked, but I'll be real pleased to come," was his reply.

He did not know that the invitation should have been given, or at least sanctioned, by Corinne's mother; and he would not have cared, had he known.

Corinne sounded the horn softly.

"I'll have Thomas drive you to wherever you are stopping."

He did not protest that he would just as soon walk. It seemed perfectly fair that he should be taken—where? It came to him for the first time that he didn't know.

"Do you wish to rejoin your friends back there?" asked Corinne, noting his hesitation.

"Oh, no! I never saw them before. They were passing my farm to-day, and offered to give me a ride. I wasn't going anywhere in particular."

"Do you mean to say that after working all these years in—in Hemlock, you just simply stepped into a strange car without any plans, and ran away?"

Logan smiled.

"Oh, I didn't exactly run away. I am of age. My only relative is an old uncle who really isn't an uncle at all, and who doesn't care a pin about me. I just decided I'd hoed corn enough."

A chauffeur stepped from the garage door, touching his hat to Corinne.

"Yes, miss?" he asked.

"Please have me taken to some reasonable hotel here," said Logan.

"To the Holyoke Arms, Thomas. And don't forget, Mr.—"

"Logan Berry."

"Mr. Berry, at six to-morrow evening! Good-by till then!"

She smiled brightly, and waved her hand as Thomas started the car.

Fifteen minutes later Logan was assigned to a two-dollar room in a quiet hotel; and after eating ham and eggs in a lunch-room across the street, he went to bed.

It would have been quite natural if sleep had refused to come to him. It had been a memorable day, beginning with the lifting of a strange car, and ending by disabling one of the most prominent sporting characters of the Connecticut Valley. It had embraced the acquaintance of several girls of widely divergent types. To say that more had happened in the past five hours than during an equal number of



years in Hemlock would not be a fair comparison, because nothing had ever happened in Hemlock—nothing but endless, monotonous distasteful toil.

It would have been quite natural had his mind raced back over this day. It would not have been strange, as he listened to the dry, sharp staccato of leather on pavement, the shrieks of many-tongued horns, all the sounds of a city, had his thoughts reverted to the weather-stained house behind its lilac hedge, and brought a homesick lump into his throat; but these things did not trouble him now. Nor did they thread his dreams when he fell asleep.

The thought he bore with him to a dreamless slumber was this—that he must never permit any man to strike him with his fist, or with any weapon. If trouble came in the future, he must as soon as possible come to a clinch. He must not wrestle, for he remembered that weaker boys had thrown him in the school yard at Hemlock; but this he knew—that once he got his hands on a man, he could pick him to pieces as a child pulls the legs from a house-fly.

Because Logan Berry was utterly free from egotism or bravado, he did not phrase it thus to himself, as he lay in that strange room in a city hotel. He put it in this way—that when a man who has grown to rely on some special form of attack is prevented from using it, he loses his advantage. Then the peculiar power which, without understanding, he knew to abide in his wrists and hands, and throughout his deceptively smooth body, must prevail.

#### IV

THE affair at the Stagger Inn was kept out of the newspapers. That much influence Tom Conner had even from his hospital cot. If he had failed to suppress it, Ashley would have done so. There was plenty of gossip, of course; but Logan Berry awoke in blessed obscurity, and was served with indifferent coffee and questionable eggs by a slatternly waitress who would, for private reasons of her own, have knelt and kissed his hands, had she known that they had wrung Conner's arm like a wash-rag.

It was necessary for him to get some money. He had just about enough left to buy a ticket to Pittsfield. There he was suavely greeted by the cashier of the Berkshire National Bank, who informed him

that he had a healthy accumulation of compound interest. When he asked for a thousand dollars, the cashier advised him to take eight hundred dollars in Liberty bonds and two hundred in small bills.

He whiled away the time between trains by getting a hair-cut. He and Uncle Amos had trimmed each other's locks whenever they became troublesome. The Pittsfield barber expressed professional curiosity when called upon to undo the damage wrought during many years. It piqued him to know why so well-dressed, self-assured a young man had so cruelly mutilated a poll.

A pretty girl wheeled her working-kit to Logan's side.

"Manicure?" she suggested.

The word was not familiar to him, either as noun or verb; but he had observed her operating on a man in the next chair, and there flashed across his mind a detail he had noticed without reflecting upon it at the time—the highly glazed finger-nails of the strange girl who had seated herself at his table in the Stagger Inn. Monty and his party were equally burnished.

Logan glanced at his own blunt, seamed nails.

"Sure!" he acquiesced.

The dollar he gave the manicurist was well earned. She told him that some half-dozen treatments would be needed to render him really presentable.

He got back to Holyoke in time to dress for dinner—a simple process of changing his brown striped shirt for the plain white one. Then, shortly after five o'clock, he set out afoot for the Ashley house.

Corinne Ashley was an impulsive girl, and her parents dwelt in constant apprehension of her next escapade; but always, after one of her little indiscretions, she voluntarily sought her father and told him all about it. She never spared herself. William Ashley felt that at any rate he knew the worst from her own lips, before the swift tongues of gossip could reach him.

On the very evening of the affair at the Stagger Inn, she perched herself on the arm of his library chair and told him all about it. She explained that Dolly Hawes had protested against taking her to the road-house, but that she had made him do so—which Ashley could readily believe, since he knew both Corinne and young Hawes.

Of course he believed only a part of what she said about Logan Berry. He realized

that she was clothing this mysterious young stranger in the garments of romance. Her rescuer was probably an opportunist, who knew perfectly well whose daughter he had taken under his protection. In one way or another, he would call for his pay.

Ashley was not in the least surprised when Corinne announced that Logan was coming to dinner the following night. He was very well satisfied with the arrangement, as he could study the youth at leisure. When he had him properly pigeon-holed, he would know exactly how to deal with him—how to get him out of Corinne's life before her girlish enthusiasm had time to ripen into anything more ominous. Ashley was entirely confident of his ability to trade with any man; and this young unknown should be easy for him.

Mrs. Ashley was more disturbed at the prospect of a strange and probably uncouth guest for dinner; but she was a colorless woman, rather helpless between a self-made husband and a self-willed child. She proceeded to give orders to her *chef* which implied a repast with as few complications as possible in the matter of forks.

A maid answered Logan Berry's ring, but Corinne herself was waiting almost at the servant's shoulder, and gave him both her hands. She was a vivacious little brunette, one of those who seem to carry an engine too powerful for their chassis, and who can act and speak only in superlatives.

"It's lovely of you to come!" she beamed, guiding him at once into the library, where her father and mother awaited him.

Ashley had decided not to wear his dinner coat, wishing to put the young visitor entirely at his ease. He need not have troubled to depart from his usual custom. Had the family worn bathing-suits, Logan would have been indifferent and incurious. He was perfectly satisfied with his own brown tweeds.

"We are glad of the chance to thank you for your assistance to this rather impulsive young lady," Ashley began, as they shook hands.

"It wasn't a nice place for her to go," Logan promptly asserted. "Looked sort of like a murderers' hang-out, to me."

Mrs. Ashley paled, but her husband laughed easily.

"Oh, not quite so bad as that! But I think we can induce her to be contented with the Country Club for a while."

Dinner was announced then, and not until the fish course did the talk veer round again to the Stagger Inn.

Logan had made no bad breaks, so far. He betrayed no nervousness, and did not tuck his napkin under his collar or eat his soup phonetically. After all, until his fourteenth year he had been gently guided in the little essentials of etiquette; and the five years at Amos Berry's trough had not entirely wiped out these early precepts. Only a butler or a social struggler would have noted his slight lapses.

"I've known Tom Conner for years," Ashley remarked, as he was helped to Hollandaise sauce. "That is, by sight and reputation. I confess that I'm unable to see why he did not maul you unmercifully. You seem almost slender, beside him."

"I guess I broke his arm," explained Logan.

"So I have heard—twisted it like a rotten branch, I was told; but that's just what I cannot understand!"

"Why, I just held his wrist and kept twisting. Something *had* to give. You could do the same thing yourself."

"You flatter me!" said Ashley. "You must have some secret. Is it ju-jitsu?"

Logan looked puzzled.

"Papa means that Japanese system of bone-breaking," explained Corinne.

"Oh! I remember hearing about it in Oregon; but I never saw it used. I guess I'm just naturally strong. My grandfathers used to bend coins and do all sorts of foolish tricks."

Corinne's brown eyes danced.

"Oh, please!" She leaned across the table, one small fist clenched about a fish-fork as if it were something to be bent. "Do show us! Can you bend a coin, too? Give him one to try, papa!"

Logan was sorry for the words that had slipped out. He had always thought it childish of his ancestors to bend horseshoes and make a public spectacle of themselves. He answered now, quite truthfully:

"I don't know. I never tried. Why should I?"

He took the coin, a bright new half-dollar that Ashley was smilingly offering; and a dull red crept over his face. There had been no extra coins to play with at Amos Berry's, and perhaps to mutilate so that they would not be taken in trade. He really did not know whether he could bend one or not. Strength, to Logan, was some-

thing to be used intelligently at need, not a mere parlor accomplishment.

He looked at the half-dollar, appearing so small in his great hands. Maybe there was some trick about coin-bending; and if he were to fail, how silly he would look to them! Yet even as he gripped the coin with thumbs and forefingers, he felt that its tough alloy must yield to him.

At first there was nothing, save the biting of the milled edge into his flesh. Then, as his teeth clenched and he began to exert something like the full pressure of his fingers, it was as if some metallic disease had attacked the silver, turning it into baser metal. He felt it collapse; and, twisting right and left, he dropped it before his plate, bent into the shape of a little propeller, the two halves almost at right angles. There were deep grooves along his forefingers, and the flesh was white from the pressure.

A deep sigh escaped Corinne. She held out her hand for the twisted half-dollar.

"I shall keep it—always!" she breathed. "I think it's just mar-velous!"

Her father nodded.

"I can see now why Tom Conner's elbow had to yield," he admitted. "It doesn't seem possible, but there's the answer before us."

Mrs. Ashley, who considered the interlude as a vulgar incident of dinner, signaled for the roast to be brought on.

"I am afraid," she said, "that our guest will feel that he is being made to pay for his dinner before he has had it."

Her mother's prim comment brought laughter to Corinne's lips; and the dinner proceeded without further interruptions.

Directly it was over, Ashley piloted Logan to the library, ordering their coffee sent there.

"Just one cigar, and we will rejoin you, my dears," he promised.

He must get the business off his mind. This rather unusual young man must be sent on his way.

Had Logan displayed an unexpected acumen in the field of finance, or even in Ashley's own business of paper-making, or had he disclosed that he was an accomplished linguist or musician, he would not have risen so high in his host's estimation as he had by simply rendering a perfectly good half-dollar unfit for circulation.

Men set an absurd appraisal on abilities they themselves do not possess. Especial-

ly does extraordinary bodily vigor force recognition, because it is rooted in the primitive elements that sleep in all men. Because William Ashley would have found the breaking of a malacca cane in his hands a difficult feat, he was profoundly impressed by Logan's deadly strength, the more so since it inhabited a rather slender body.

He was a keen reader of men; and he knew that the boy was utterly free from egotistical swank. Tremendously strong, very quiet and unassuming, good-looking enough, he was far more dangerous than Ashley had expected to find Corinne's strange cavalier. He realized that this stranger must be handled subtly.

He indicated a deep leather chair facing the reading-light on the table, and pushed across a box of oily Havanás, lighting one for himself.

"Prefer a cigaret? Don't use tobacco at all? Well, I know better than to offer you a cordial. Your face shows that you and alcohol are not close friends."

"I haven't had a drink since I was fourteen, sir."

Ashley's round eyes blinked through the blue fog of his cigar, and Logan smiled at his puzzled look.

"Back home, my father used to 'lay down a sound claret.' That was the way he expressed it; and he always had a few bottles of very old Amontillado. I didn't get to try any of that—he said it was too good to waste on women and boys—but I remember he used to give me a glass of the claret for dinner, diluted with water. He said it was better for me than coffee."

He sipped from his thin after-dinner cup.

"I'm a backslider, you see; for I've turned from claret to coffee, after all."

"Your father—may I ask what was his business or profession?"

"He was some sort of commission agent, trading between Portland and the Far East. I was too young to know much about it. He seemed either to have a lot of money or not much of any."

"He's not living, I take it?"

Logan shook his head.

"I've no relatives but Amos Berry, a distant cousin who was my guardian. That's why I came East."

"Have you lived hereabout?"

"Yes, sir—in Hemlock."

"And now you feel that you need a little larger horizon?"

Logan reflected.

"Why, I don't know as I have thought much about it. Day before yesterday an automobile stopped at our farm, and I got to talking with the people in it. They said they'd take me to the city."

"To Holyoke?"

"No—I didn't know where they were going. I just felt that I'd hoed my share of corn; so I got in and rode away."

"Thinking of going into business?"

"Well, I haven't had much time to think. I've been right busy ever since I got here."

"So I judge," Ashley dryly agreed; "but you will naturally want to find some steady occupation?"

"I suppose so—though I have a small income to live on."

"You are fortunate—if it permits you to live up to your ambitions, that is."

"What does it cost to live in Holyoke, Mr. Ashley?"

"That depends. It costs me about a thousand a week, for current expenses."

"That's all I've got for a whole year. It's in a bank in Pittsfield. My father left me twenty thousand dollars, and it has grown some while I was growing. But I wasn't counting on living as you do. For one thing, I'm not even married."

The words were significant. Ashley felt that their talk was veering round to essential things.

"It is conceivable that a single man, who has been accustomed to simple farm life, might exist in Holyoke—that is, might keep himself from actual cold and hunger—on a thousand a year; but if I am any judge of character, you are not the type to be satisfied with a bare subsistence. You have ambitions."

"I don't know whether I have or not. It was just getting sick of weeding onions, splitting firewood, never seeing anybody except folks whirling past in automobiles, and going to bed as soon as it was dark, that made me leave. I didn't have any plans."

"I feel friendly toward you, Berry, for what you did for Corinne. I have some influence, and could help you to a position when you have looked about a bit."

"I don't want you to feel that way about it; and I don't know what I'd be good for. Don't know the first thing about business—bookkeeping, selling goods, running a machine, or making out bills. Can't even

run a typewriter or an automobile, or add up a column of figures right the first time. They had to show me how to make out a check at the bank."

"You have other qualities, if I am a judge, and you can learn. You have perseverance, courage, confidence. I fancy you would not shrink from approaching anybody, however great, or going anywhere, on legitimate business, would you?"

"Anybody would do that, I suppose."

"No—about two-thirds would wonder what people would think, or say, or even do, if their business took them into an environment where they were conspicuous, or were not wanted. I have something definite in mind. It has just occurred to me. If you were asked to go where you certainly would be snubbed, and might even be assaulted, it would not deter you—or that is the impression you make upon me."

"Of course I should not mind, so long as I had a right to go to such a place," Logan said.

Ashley nodded.

"I knew it. Now it so happens that there is a man in Boston who owes me thirty thousand dollars. Judson Wayne, my debtor, is one of the sort spoken of as a 'young man about town'—which almost invariably means a wastrel. He is of good family and social position, and has the morals of a horned toad. He has plenty of money, but spends it as fast as he gets it. He never pays a bill until he has to. A year or so ago he came to me for a small block of stock which would give him control of a certain company. I happened to have it, and was perfectly willing to accommodate him. Of course, he paid for the stock, and I made a nice profit on it; but there was a verbal agreement that he was to pay me a bonus of thirty thousand dollars within thirty days of the next stockholders' meeting, at which Wayne got himself elected treasurer. I've never been able to get even a reply to my dunning letters. The contract being verbal, I have no legal redress. All that I can do is to annoy him—pester him until he pays to get rid of the collector. Get the idea?"

Logan nodded.

"The man who has the nerve and the staying-power to bedevil him everywhere—at home, at his clubs, at all sorts of social functions—will probably be thrown out by butlers and stewards, and everything like that; but if he sticks, and especially if he



succeeds in making Wayne notorious, he will get the thirty thousand in the end. To that man I'd give—well, say one-third of the money, ten thousand dollars, for his fee. How does it strike you?"

"If that's all, I'd like it," Logan promptly replied. "It doesn't require any commercial training. All I have to do is keep after him and hand him a bill. That's easy!"

"Not too easy," warned Ashley. "It wouldn't be so for me, or for most men. I want you to realize just what it means."

"It's legal for me to dun him anywhere, isn't it? Well, then, what do I care about his feelings, or those of his chauffeurs and butlers? I'd be very much pleased to earn that money!"

"Good! And when could you go to Boston? Shall you need much time to get ready?"

"I'll go to-morrow," promised Logan. "There's nothing to keep me in Holyoke."

These were honeyed words to William Ashley. He felt the pleasant glow that always came to him after a diplomatic victory. He had long ago crossed Judson Wayne's name off the list of his assets, and didn't much care whether he ever got a nickel from him; but he would delight in bothering him. By setting Berry on the fellow's trail, thus removing him from the susceptible Corinne's proximity, he was killing two birds with one stone. Pretty hard to beat an old head, after all!

Logan Berry had been a puzzle to him; he felt that he would have made a fatal mistake to try to flatter, bribe, or coerce this unemotional youngster with the steady eyes. Instead, he had won his gratitude, and made use of him besides.

"Call at my office to-morrow morning," he said, giving him a card. "My secretary will give you a lot of duplicate bills to bombard Wayne with—some expense money, too."

"No, sir—I don't want that. The ten thousand is more than enough."

"You haven't got it yet, you know!"

"I shall," said Logan Berry.

Ashley's air was almost paternal as they passed into the music-room, where Corinne and her mother were waiting.

"I think so highly of our young guest that I have lost no time in hiring him, before one of my rivals gets him," Ashley announced, clapping Logan on the shoulder.

Corinne glanced up eagerly. That would

mean that he would remain in Holyoke. She could see him often, and papa could advance him so fast! She had felt a little apprehension over their long talk in the library; but evidently her father saw him as she did. Ashley's next sentence, therefore, fell like ice-water on her heart.

"Mr. Berry leaves us to-morrow for Boston; so this is a sort of 'hail and farewell' occasion."

"But—but I thought you said you'd hired him!" faltered Corinne.

"I have—to go to Boston. I need him there, and I think he is pleased to go—eh, Berry?"

"I've heard a lot about Boston. I think I shall like it."

A genial air pervaded the music-room. Ashley rather liked the young man, anyhow; and his satisfaction at the success of his diplomacy made him more than usually urbane. Mrs. Ashley shared in his relief at the removal of what might conceivably prove a menace.

Logan remembered a maxim of his own mother's, a sort of general guide as to the length of any sort of a call.

"Stay just long enough," she had said, "so that every one will wish you had stayed a little longer."

Acting on this precept, he rose in a few moments from the chair by the white mahogany piano on which Corinne had been playing favorites of the hour for him. They were all new, to Logan, familiar only with the old hymns that had been sung by three generations in the Hemlock meeting-house, and with a few faint boyish memories of such catchy melodies as he had whistled in Portland, on his way to school.

Corinne herself accompanied him to the door. The girl was a little tremulous. Had she been thrown into his society for a week, she would probably have yawned and forgotten him; but his sudden departure on the very heels of his romantic rescue, as she considered it, wrought a sentimental mood.

Logan probably might have kissed her as she stood framed in the shadowed doorway; but it did not occur to him to do so. It was not at all that he was unresponsive. His own youth rose to the appeal of her, and she was the first pretty girl who had ever shown any interest in him. In fact, he wanted to kiss her; but he didn't know that he wanted to.

The following afternoon found him look-

ing from the train window at the pleasant country between Worcester and Boston, and before sundown he was established in a room on Pinckney Street.

During the journey he had looked over two or three Boston papers—the first he had ever read. In one of them he had found the addresses of several lodging-houses, one of which proved to his liking—an old brick house, with green ivy and shutters outside, and white paneling and wrought-iron latches within. In another column his eye fell by chance upon a brief item announcing that Mr. Judson Wayne was giving an after-theater supper at the Woodcock, that very evening.

There was in Logan Berry an instinct for prompt action. It had not occurred to him to look up Wayne for a day or so; but now that his name was, so to speak, flung in his very eye, and there was always the possibility of having a long hunt to land him, there seemed no good reason for not presenting the first of his sizable stack of bills for the thirty thousand dollars owed to William Ashley.

He had no idea where the Woodcock might be, or what. Directly after supper at a dairy lunch, he inquired, and found that broad was the way that led to the place of destruction. Broad, that is, for Boston; since the place was in the South End, on Washington Street.

The Woodcock—now, alas, no more—was the only real jazzy resort Boston ever had. Its negro band was the jungliest, its cabaret singers the most disturbing. The negro waiters wore little red paper hats, and served things in tall glasses and squat mugs that caused men and women to forget that such things as clocks existed. There was no better food anywhere, for the place had been a famous rendezvous of horsemen long before the reign of jazz.

When Logan entered, the terrific din at first stunned him. As a single man, he was directed to stand in line until a small corner table was vacated.

The two connecting rooms seemed fairly to vibrate to the outrageous syncopation of the four perspiring negroes who beat drums, yowled on sliding trombones, worked cymbals with their feet and triangles with their elbows, frantically cast aside a tambourine to whack a dried gourd suspended overhead, blew unexpectedly into screeching whistles and remorseless tubes, rasped sheets of sandpaper, and tore from the

vitals of banjo and bassoon sounds their makers never dreamed of. Through it all the gigantic leader performed hellish miracles on a piano with lifted cover, managing to weave the multifarious toots, wails, and crashes into a sort of insane order.

Listening to all this for the first time, Logan was stirred by strange emotions. It wasn't music; it was the foul passion of the tropics rhythmically phrased. His head seemed to swell and diminish as if it were flexible. He wanted to do something—he didn't know what, but he wanted to do it!

Ancestral experiences were crawling in his veins. The recurring note of the kettledrum—a forebear had listened to that in Africa, while a painted priest beat a hollow log over which was stretched a tanned human skin. That throaty reed—his great-grandfather had been maddened by it in Borneo, where he lay under a grass mat, burning up with fever.

"What do you know about that?" whined a voice close to his ear.

Logan turned to behold a tall, stout blonde, in a décolleté costume which curiously affected the short hairs on the back of his neck. She was sauntering through the rooms, pausing to sing her refrain directly at this one or the other. She grinned as she caught Logan's gaze, and waddled away, swinging her hips in rhythm to her lines.

"Some flappers Wayne's got, I'll say!"

The words came to him during a lull, while the exhausted band imbibed the miscellaneous drinks sent up to them.

He looked aside to a couple of men who, with amused eyes, were watching a stall about half-way up the first room.

A man and three superficially pretty and very young girls were dining there. The girls, indeed, seemed hardly more than precocious children in the extreme of undress.

"Three from the front row in 'Ain't It the Limit?'" commented the same voice that had directed his looks that way.

Judson Wayne, he observed, was a rather pompous young man of about thirty, red-faced and beautifully tailored. He had codfish eyes and an outthrust chin which close scrutiny revealed as being naturally weak. He seemed to be having a thoroughly good time, and was keeping two waiters fairly busy. Just as Logan looked, one of them was setting on the table an enormous pitcher with sprigs of green herbs sticking from its gaping mouth.

The two nearest tables were joining in, their occupants seeming to form one large and hilarious party.

Logan perceived that opportunity was knocking at his door. He was saved the trouble of asking questions, perhaps to be informed that his prey was in some inaccessible private dining-room up-stairs.

The jazz had not begun again, but his veins still tingled with the strange exhilaration it had brought him. He began to move up the room. His progress was slow, being impeded at every step by hurrying waiters, couples strolling in and out, bare-foot girls, and the great billowy blonde. No one paid any attention to him, however, and presently he stood beside the man he was seeking.

"Wayne? Judson Wayne?" he asked.

The red-faced man turned from the girl down whose corsage he was playfully trying to drop ashes from his cigaret.

"Yes?" he said, his dull eyes faintly surprised. "What is it?"

Logan Berry handed him a neat oblong paper. Wayne took it and looked at it irritably. His face grew dark, since it could not turn redder.

"What the devil—" he began.

"That thirty thousand dollars you owe Mr. Ashley," explained Logan. "I'm his collector."

"The hell you are!" Judson Wayne barked, quite oblivious to the fact that ladies were present. "You've got your nerve to intrude here!"

Logan leaned easily against the partition of the stall.

"Mr. Ashley told me it would have more effect if I dunned you before your friends," he explained. "Sort of show you up, he thought. Wants me to dun you in public, always."

Wayne's features set in a hideous grin, the burlesque of mirth.

"Is—that—so?" he yelled. "And you think you can get away with that, you cheap skate, in a place where I spend more money in a night than he pays you in a year? Here, you!" He gestured frantically toward a stocky gentleman in evening clothes, who was strolling up the room. "Have this boulder thrown out. He's annoying us!"

The stroller crossed alertly over, uttering a sibilant hiss which instantly evoked, from nowhere, another and stockier duplicate of himself. Together they laid rude

hands upon Logan Berry, and yanked him toward the exit.

He felt no resentment toward the bouncers. In fact, he was ready to go. He had presented his first bill, and in doing so he had attracted the attention of at least a score of people, who had eagerly listened to all that was said.

It was only by instinct that one hand clutched the table-cloth as he was dragged away. His other hand caught at the cloth on the table adjoining.

In a second, frightful confusion reigned. Men and women rose, shrieking; one fell backward in her chair. A crashing torrent of glass and china, fruit, liquids, portions of salad, game, hot coffee, cigaret-stubs, and cutlery poured upon the floor. The devastation enraged the two men who thought they were throwing Logan Berry out. They became a little rough.

"Don't do that!" he remonstrated pleasantly, as his collar threatened to part.

"I'll learn you to butt into my place!" a beery voice grated into his ear.

The words ended in a howl as Logan reached up to the hand which was oppressing his neck-band, gathered it into one of his, and squeezed mightily. He thought—but he hoped he was mistaken—that he felt the crunching of bones as he let go, and found himself at the head of the stairs. He shook off the other man, and without turning his head, walked down and out through the bar.

At the door, a hand touched his shoulder. A thin-faced youth who had been standing at the bar was beside him.

"I'm from the *News*," he said. "Any story up-stairs? What happened?"

Logan told him in few simple words.

"And you mean to follow that bird up wherever there's a gallery?"

"Certainly. That was Mr. Ashley's wish—to make him ashamed."

"Huh! And how long do you figure you'll last, feller? If he can't get you, he can hire some guy to do it."

"I reckon I'll last longer than he will," Logan flung over his shoulder, as he left the Woodcock. "They can't stop me from presenting a bill to him. It's legal to do that, anywhere!"

## V

THE *News* carried a spicy account of Logan's first evening in Boston. It was the sort of thing the thin-faced reporter did

very well indeed; and the rewrite man let it stand as written.

"Bill-collector stages movie stunt in well-known South End restaurant," the head-lines said. The air was described as being full of custards and curses; and while no names were mentioned, there were plenty of readers who recognized Judson Wayne as the victim.

Logan read the account while breakfasting. He cut it out with his jack-knife, to mail it to his employer. He thought that Ashley would be gratified by his promptness in getting to work; and he was especially pleased with the concluding sentence:

The nonchalant young collector assured the *News* reporter that this was only the opening gun in his campaign of publicity.

He did not inclose a letter of his own. He had never written one in his life; so he merely put his address on the back of the envelope.

He felt that he could now devote a little time to his own welfare; and early in the forenoon he was in Cambridge, inquiring the way to the home of the president of Harvard University. Boston, he had heard, was a city of culture, where even the chauffeurs were credited with a working knowledge of the Elizabethan drama, and newsboys cried their wares in broad vowels. Logan was a modest youth, and realized that his ignorance would need the strongest possible aid were he to bear his part in a community of such traditions.

To the maid who pleasantly inquired his business with her employer, he replied that it was concerned with education. After a brief wait, he was shown into the president's study. The great educator scanned him keenly in the effort to place the caller among the hundreds of young men whose faces he carried in his mental gallery.

"You do not know me, sir," Logan said. "I have only just come to Boston. I felt that it would count against me to be unable to talk about the things Boston folks discuss. Don't you think so?"

The president agreed that it might be a handicap.

"I haven't much education, but I don't exactly want to study the sort of things they teach at night schools, and I don't want to be forever asking questions."

"Just what is it you think you need, Mr.—er—Berry?"

"Why, the things that everybody knows about, but that they don't teach in Hemlock, where I come from—the great books men have written, and the best ones to read to-day, and the good plays—not the ones with girls and tights—and all about the paintings in the museums, and so forth. Music, too—I want to know what the bands are playing; not the one on the Common and at the beaches, but at swell concerts. You know all these things, don't you?"

The president admitted that he had a general idea of some of the subjects, but did not pretend to have mastered them all.

"Well, anyhow, you know more about them than I need to; and it seems to me when you want anything, you ought to go to the best expert there is. Don't you think so, too?"

The president did.

"I know you're pretty busy, sir, but I've heard that teachers are underpaid, and that they sometimes take private pupils. I guess they can push them pretty fast that way, if they're industrious—the pupils, I mean; so I came to see if I could arrange to pay you to train me, in the evening, after college is closed. I'm willing to give whatever it is worth."

The elder man regarded him without smiling.

"I'm sorry, but my superiors are very jealous in the matter of my time," he explained. "They feel that I ought to conserve all my strength for Harvard. You would be surprised to know how the university has grown during the past year. If they heard that I was eking out my salary by tutoring, it might cost me my position; but I will take your address, and in a day or so the dean will send a young man to you. We always have bright and needy upper-classmen who are very glad to get a little tutoring. In your case, it may require more than one. I'm not sure that Harvard at present possesses a student who is grounded in all the subjects you require."

Logan regretted that he must be content with a substitute, but felt sure that any one recommended by the president of Harvard would be capable.

"I thank you very much, sir," he said simply, rising to go.

"Not at all! I thank you for the compliment you pay me in consulting me," the president responded, solemnly shaking hands.



He went to the window and looked out as Logan Berry passed up the street. Then he gazed at his own right hand, opening and closing the fingers cautiously. They felt a little numb.

The very next day a long-haired young man wearing thick goggles, and looking not unlike an underfed owl, called on Logan at his lodging-house. He introduced himself as James Browne, and for an hour probed the depths of Logan's ignorance, making notes from time to time on his frayed cuffs.

On parting he gave him a list of books to obtain from the Public Library, ranging from an elementary history of the novel to the latest best-seller, a text-book on art, and an anthology of familiar quotations. It was arranged that tickets were to be purchased for a Shakespearian revival then running, and that on the following Sunday afternoon they were to meet in the room devoted to Assyrian bas-reliefs at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Thus Logan Berry began to acquire a thick coat of cultural varnish. The owl-like one sat by his side at drama or symphony, explaining, between acts and after the performances, what it was all about. He disemboweled art and literature, dragging forth their vital organs with passionate enthusiasm.

Logan added such words to his vocabulary as "impressionism," "*vers libre*," "psychoanalysis." He could distinguish the English horn from the clarinet in the austere Symphony line-up, and tried to prefer the old masters to the modern French school in the galleries. It cost him a good deal of money, and he realized that he was living far beyond his income; but he was counting on receiving the ten-thousand-dollar fee from Ashley before snow fell.

Judson Wayne was cruising on somebody's yacht, and Logan had to mark time until he returned. Ashley could not expect him to charter a tugboat in pursuit.

One night, on returning home from a lecture on something very dull, Logan was surprised to find a letter on the table where the lodgers' mail was left. It was a pleasant little note, inviting him to tea the following afternoon at one of the fine old houses on Louisburg Square, just off Pinckney Street. The writer, Miss Gertrude Bean, informed him that she was a classmate of Corinne Ashley's at Smith, and that it would be a pleasure to meet one of her friends, a stranger in Boston.

A genial warmth flooded his veins. So Corinne regarded him as a friend! She had not forgotten him, and she remembered that he must be lonely here!

He knew all about the Gordon Beans of Louisburg Square, from his landlady. There was no door in Boston closed to them. The original Bean had sprouted in Salem, which set them above even the oldest families indigenous to Boston. There were rich, personable young men who would have given an eye-tooth to enter the severe Ionic doorway of that great, high-shouldered brick mansion in Louisburg Square. The omniscient James Browne couldn't have got in on any pretext.

Logan fell asleep wondering if Gertrude Bean was as pretty as the vivacious Corinne. Probably not. Browne had told him that pretty women always chose plain ones as their intimates, and he had given a psychological reason for it.

Logan passed into dreamland, and wandered through violently green meadows with Corinne holding his hand and from time to time calling him "my friend" in soothing tones. Her voice grew loud and shrill. He opened his eyes. Outside, a milkman was arguing with a janitor over a missing bottle.

Gertrude Bean looked forward with a keen relish to meeting Mr. Berry. Corinne's letter, a little extravagant, left many details to be filled in. She chronicled the exciting incident at the Stagger Inn, her rescuer's display of herculean strength, and his employment by her father to recover money owed by Judson Wayne. She enclosed the newspaper account of the Woodcock affair.

Gertrude's mental picture was of a hulking young farmer with a horseshoe jaw and iron hands, probably covered with warts. She giggled over the humiliation of Wayne, whom she knew and detested. She carefully refrained from shocking her mother with the facts, contenting herself by carelessly announcing that she wished to have a young friend of Corinne's take tea with them; and she saw to it that nobody but her mother would be present.

She was a little disappointed with the reality. Logan was too much like dozens of other young men she knew. There was nothing outstanding in his looks, clothes, or bearing. True, he had unusually large, muscular hands, but they were white and well manicured. If he had not learned to

juggle a teacup as deftly as one born to Louisburg Square, his perfect lack of self-consciousness covered trifling errors. He seemed to be reading the same books that everybody else was reading, and to be going to the same plays.

Her mother, after the five minutes' watchfulness she always bestowed upon a new male, relapsed comfortably into the obese inattention in which she dwelt. Gertrude was bored. She felt the urge to do something for him, on Corinne's account, and decided that he might be dismissed with a visitor's card to some golf club.

"Are you keen for golf or tennis, Mr. Berry?"

Logan shook his head.

"I can't play any games; but I should love to learn, if anybody would teach me."

Now Gertrude was good at all sports. She was a perfect foil to Corinne, being a deliciously small and plump yet firm-muscled blonde. She was unafraid of the sun, which had given her face and arms a golden tint, beneath which flowed the rich crimson tide of life with every deep breath.

She opened her blue eyes at Logan's words. Save one or two invalids, there were no men in her set who did not perform creditably in at least one sport. It might be fun to teach him. Every good player cherishes the dream of discovering and grooming a champion. This boy, with no previous bad habits or instructions to overcome, and phenomenally strong—though he certainly did not look it—was tempting material.

"You don't ride, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; I always had a cow-pony when I was a boy."

"Good! Then if you care to meet me here some afternoon, early, we'll canter over to Brae Mere."

"I haven't any bats or anything, and I don't know how to pick them out."

"Unnecessary. Dad buys a new club every time he shoots a high score. Uses them once, on an average, and those he doesn't break over his knee, or give to his caddie, are stored in his locker. Rackets, too. I'll fit you out at the club."

A date was made for the very next afternoon; and Logan went directly to a sports shop. Here he explained his situation to a young clerk, who advised a homespun combination suit, with an extra pair of flannel trousers for tennis, and heavy rubber-soled shoes, which he could use for all sports.

He could ride out in the knickers, and be ready for golf as soon as he dismounted. This was quite customary, the salesman assured him.

At the stable recommended by Miss Bean he made arrangements for a saddle-horse. Its hire for the afternoon was as much as the cost of a cow-pony in his boyhood. Expensive, trailing round with Corinne's sort, he reflected; but worth it.

He set his will on mastering one or two sports as rapidly as possible. He didn't care a straw for them as recreations; but they were all part of one's education, like concertos, free verse, and the ability to recognize a genuine Ming vase.

Gertrude was waiting for him when he loped up to her door the following afternoon. A groom held her horse, a wiry little polo-pony. As soon as Logan appeared, she came down the steps in her smart tan whipcord, with a jaunty little hat, her crop slapping against shiny, high-heeled boots. They turned down the hill and into Beacon Street, thence through the Back Bay Fens, at the farther end of which the eighteen-hole course of Brae Mere begins.

From her father's collection she selected a mid-iron, advising Logan to content himself with one club at first; and after waiting for a mixed foursome to get under way, she showed him how to grip his iron and take his stance. He was very awkward, and her own free, easy swings seemed marvelous to him. Gertrude played a pretty game, graceful and accurate, and without trying for distance she kept well in the course.

Nothing out of the usual took place during the afternoon, except that once or twice, when Logan chanced to hit the ball squarely, it carried a prodigious distance. The home professional was a long driver; but Gertrude could not recall seeing him get the distance out of the wood that Logan covered with his iron. One ball sailed entirely over the two-hundred-and-thirty-yard hole they were playing for, and their fore caddie never found it. Once on the fairway, when he topped his ball, he sliced off the upper third as neatly as a curate ever chipped a boiled egg, leaving the mutilated remainder motionless in its lie.

Gertrude silently noted these things, and wondered what would happen if her pupil ever met a teed ball just right with a driver; but in general he was even clumsier than the novice usually is. Quite natural-

ly, he grew worse toward the end, and finished with a terrible fourteen on a hole of less than three hundred yards.

"Come day after to-morrow, and we'll try a little tennis," she said, while they drank horse's-necks on the clubhouse veranda. "For to-night I have an extra ticket for a dance at the Copley Hotel. Would you be bored, alone?"

He thought that he would be, since he didn't dance, nor did he care to learn.

Gertrude glanced slyly over the rim of her glass.

"Mr. Judson Wayne is going, I believe," she remarked casually.

Logan did not start, but the pupils of his eyes dilated.

"I suppose I'm foolish not to accept," he amended. "Never have seen a real dance in my life; but I'd like to pay for the ticket."

She laughed, her blue eyes glinting with malice.

"It's a subscription affair—no tickets sold. I'm sure it will be more interesting with you present."

He looked keenly at her, but could read nothing in her face. How pretty she was! Different from Corinne, entirely. She was *cuddly*. He blushed as the word formed in his mind; and when she noticed it, guessing the cause, her throaty laughter almost flustered him.

"You're thinking that if I tried to dance, and made out as badly as I did in golf, it would be a regular show!"

"No, not that. I don't expect you to dance. You are to pipe for us!"

But she wouldn't explain what she meant, and changed the subject by challenging him to race her once around the club paddock for another horse's-neck.

He lost, her pony beating him to a quick start on the short stretch; and then they rode home through the Fens, all crimson and gold in the sunset.

Logan was glad of the chance to nag Wayne again. He must not let social claims thrust his true reason for being in Boston into the background. Besides, he needed that ten thousand. The thousand he had drawn in Pittsfield, which he had expected to last him a long time, would burn up like dew before the sun at the pace he was traveling.

Yet he did not feel that he was being imprudent. Golf was going to be no pastime—he could see that. Tennis would prob-

ably be worse. These sports were merely things one had to acquire, as he was acquiring culture from the owl-like James Browne. There was fun in being with so lovely and enticing a little lady as Gertrude—or Corinne; but it was their usefulness to him that counted most.

That Copley dance, for instance. He could not have gone to it without a ticket, and money would not buy one. He was glad that he was not going with Gertrude, or with any one. It would have been embarrassing to decide what to do.

Going stag—he had learned the phrase from the useful Browne—he could present his second bill to Judson Wayne without scruples, and the effect ought to be better than at a public resort, like the Woodcock. Here Wayne would be known to everybody, and his feelings, in consequence, would suffer more.

It was ten o'clock when Logan entered the Copley Hotel. His cap and gloves were thrust into a coat pocket rather than left with the rack girl, because it seemed more than probable that his departure from this function of austere pleasure might be hasty. Nearly every male he touched elbows with wore evening clothes. There were a few in tuxedos, and here and there a hotel guest in tweeds, looking on.

For some time he amused himself watching Boston disport itself. The dancing struck him as a sad sort of half shuffle, half walk, not in the least like what he had imagined dancing to be. The costumes of some of the girls shocked him a little; and he had not seen so much paint since he visited a Sioux reservation as a lad.

As with the Indians, painting seemed to be a rite. There were plenty of fresh, ruddy cheeks and lips; occasionally they burgeoned forth where the make-up had rubbed off.

Gertrude Bean floated by him once, and gave him a friendly nod and smile. The music was like a pale echo of the barbaric strains by which he had been hypnotized at the Woodcock. At one end of the Venetian Room sat a row of stately patronesses. Had a bolt of lightning struck this twenty feet of femininity, the Society of Mayflower Descendants would have come automatically to an end.

He did not make out Judson Wayne until an intermission caused a little disintegration of dancing couples, one of which stopped close by the door where Logan

stood. Wayne, extraordinarily correct in the newest of his five suits of evening clothes, was left chatting with his partner, and with three or four others who at once clustered about. Everybody seemed to know him. Gertrude Bean was not visible, however.

Logan slipped forward, unnoticed by his victim. One or two of the girls looked curiously at him as he approached, but Wayne did not see him until he was tapped upon one glossy black shoulder.

"That little bill you owe, Wayne!"

Logan spoke in a loud, clear tone, at the same time presenting one of his duplicate bills.

Wayne's pale eyes protruded until they might have been skewered. His red face flamed in all shades from infra-red to ultraviolet. Perhaps for the first time in his life, he acted instead of speaking, or getting some to else to act for him.

The flabby blow that brushed Logan's cheek was no more than an awkward dab, but it enraged him. His own right hand shot out, and iron fingers seized Wayne's coat lapel and the edge of his pearl silk waistcoat. There came a quick, irresistible heave, the harsh protest of good broadcloth, and Judson Wayne stood in his shirt, a pair of heliotrope silk braces revealed to an admiring world. His ruined coat and vest were slammed in a heap at his feet.

A chorus of gasps and twitters rose from the score who had seen, without understanding, the unfrocking of their idol. Logan turned away.

"Don't forget to send a check for that little item, Wayne!" he called over his shoulder.

An agitated hotel employee placed a hand on his arm.

"You got a ticket, mister?"

Logan showed his card, and the uniformed one fell back. No one hindered him as he made his leisurely way out through the lobby.

Half-way down, the distracted figure of Judson Wayne passed him *en route* to the coat-room. He was still in his shirt-sleeves, his dress coat being beyond salvage. In his agitation he did not even notice his tormentor as he brushed by, his heliotrope suspenders twinkling.

There was nothing about it in the morning newspapers.

Corinne received an accurate account that afternoon, however, from Gertrude

Bean; but when Logan rode out to the Country Club the next day to play tennis, no reference was made to the incident.

"I'm afraid you were bored at our dance. You left early," Gertrude said.

"No—I enjoyed it. One or two others left at the same time that I did."

Gertrude's little sister, Sally Bean, sat on the side-lines and commented on Logan's awkwardness with a racket. Her remarks were very free and idiomatic.

Sally was just turned seventeen. She had been carefully nurtured in about seven exclusive private schools, being expelled from one after the other. Her average stay at each was a trifle less than one full semester. When Logan first saw her bobbed hair and plucked eyebrows, he had innocently enough inquired if she was recovering from an attack of typhoid. Sally was now squaring the account.

"Corinne Ashley is coming here for a visit," Gertrude announced, when she was tired of trying to keep him from slamming tennis-balls over the twelve-foot back net. "She's coming to-night, to stay a week. We'll have some foursomes. She doesn't play much golf, but Sally is really good, for a child."

"Good enough to spot you half a stroke a hole!" commented the younger sister, noisily sucking the lemon rind from her tall glass. "I'll take Rufus here as a partner, and show you up!"

"You'll team up with Corinne," asserted Gertrude. "As usual, you'll chatter while I'm driving and putting, and probably cheat when you get bunkered and think no one is looking."

"I don't get into bunkers, and you can yell your head off when I'm driving," retorted Sally. "I've got no nerves!"

"No—yours is plain *nerve*!"

They squabbled almost all the way home through the Fens.

Sally rode as if born in a saddle. Her bare knees flashed in the setting sun, and her bobbed hair stood up like a brush when she took off her tam. Gertrude shuddered.

"The little rowdy! She just gives poor mama one sick headache after another. As for dad, he simply lives at his club until he has bribed some other finishing-school to take her on; but she finishes the schools, instead!"

The arrival of Corinne speeded the action up considerably. There was a lot of golf, with Logan growing worse, if possible;



losing balls far out of bounds, missing two-foot putts, and causing Sally to outdo herself in juvenile sarcasm. There were long rides into the Middlesex Fells, which cut horrid gashes in Logan's packet of Liberty bonds. There was the beginning of instruction in bridge.

Meanwhile, he was falling in love—not with the dark, soulful Corinne, nor the warm, vigorous Gertrude, but with love itself. The girls egged each other on. Alone, each would soon have tired of Logan. Together, their primitive instinct of rivalry was stimulated.

When he chanced to be alone with Corinne, his mind was full of Gertrude; yet when favored with her company, he could think only of Corinne. When Sally was present, he was kept sufficiently busy defending himself from her sharp tongue.

The week ended with what might easily have been a tragedy. Late one afternoon they were cantering home from Brae Mere, when Gertrude's mount suddenly shied at a vagrant newspaper, and reared straight up. The girl was a skilful rider, and at once gave him his head, throwing her weight as far forward as possible. Then, when she saw that he was actually toppling over backward, she freed her feet from the stirrups, seized mane and pommel, and threw herself out and away as the animal came crashing down.

It was all over in three or four horrifying seconds of time. The horse struck fairly on his head, breaking his neck; and, after a single convulsive shudder, he lay inert across the girl's thighs.

Logan threw himself in one motion from his horse, Sally catching the reins deftly. He knelt by Gertrude, whose eyes stared calmly up at him.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"I don't know. There's no feeling at all below my waist. You must ride on till you find a mounted officer, and help him drag Tony off from me. I can't move."

Logan grunted impatiently, then rose and stooped over her horse. It was a pretty little polo-pony, standing about nine hundred all saddled. Even as he touched its flank, his instinctive pity went out to the animal, instead of the girl held fast by its weight. It is said that a Down-Easter never fails to react to the beauty of a boat, a Southerner to that of a woman; but a Westerner turns first to a horse. Logan felt his eyes moisten at the thought of this

nervous, graceful creature so suddenly become an inert mass.

He wasted no time in regrets, however. Bending far over, he embraced its round barrel in his long arms. For a moment he stood motionless, while Corinne looked on tearfully and Sally curiously.

Then, suddenly, the dead pony began to move. Inch by inch it rose from the soft bridle-path, until it cleared Gertrude's little boots. Carefully, holding the polo-pony as if it were a big dog, Logan lifted it free and set it to one side. Then he raised Gertrude and let her limp heels touch earth.

"Can you stand?"

She could not. There was no pain, but her legs seemed to belong to some one else. Clasp ing her in one arm, he remounted his horse and put him to a lope. Ten minutes later, from the edge of the Fens, an ambulance bore the girl to her home.

By the time the others had reached Louisburg Square, the Beans' family doctor had pronounced Gertrude all right, save for a couple of broken legs which would soon knit in so sound a little body; but there would be no more golf for her for some time.

## VI

IN the worst of us there is some good. Tom Conner was pretty bad, but he had a good memory. He was up and about now, out of pain, but with one wing flapping awkwardly when he walked. He would have to get on with one good arm for the rest of his life.

Fortunately he still had his trusty right, so he could use a pen. Misspelled but very earnest missives began to go forth from his hang-out in Holyoke. As a direct result, the depths of certain viscous pools in Boston stirred, and there emerged a new lodger to appear at Logan Berry's home on Pinckney Street.

The newcomer had no luggage, and paid a week's rental in advance for the small room he took without questioning its shabbiness or the price. He registered in the landlady's guest-book as Ernest Emmons. It will save time if he is described as looking exceedingly unlike his name.

Logan passed him once or twice in the dark hall, but paid no attention to him. Lodgers came and went, and so long as they paid no questions were asked. Such is Pinckney Street.

Corinne had returned home, as the doc-

tor wished Gertrude to be left in perfect quiet until her temperature was reduced. She was doing well, and Logan had sent flowers and fruit, guided by the omniscient James Browne, who also ordered the proper style of engraved visiting-card for his pupil.

By general consent, the care of Sally fell upon Logan. It was felt that with her out of the house Gertrude's tenure of life was perceptibly increased. Logan had long since approved himself to Mrs. Bean as a sedate and reliable young man, and Sally's father would have taken a chance with any one who would keep the girl busy until he could dig up some school whose principal had never heard of her.

So they were thrown together a good deal; and as his position was now a quasi-official one, horses were supplied daily at Mr. Bean's expense. Logan felt that this was only fair, because he could not afford to spend real money from his own vanishing hoard, just to be insulted by a snip of a girl.

Despite his resentment, Sally fascinated him. He often wondered if she was pretty. It was hard to tell, because of the various things she had done to herself.

She boasted that hers were "the pluckiest eyebrows" in school. Her skirts were notably short in an era of short-skirtedness. Her hair was bobbed a full inch higher than that of any stenographer in Boston. Her stockings were rolled well below her knees. She wore surprising hats, and freely borrowed from her mother's and sister's wardrobes whatever took her fancy. Her bill for paint and powder was quite an item in itself.

Yet, though she did her worst, she could not utterly ruin a sort of piquant beauty she possessed. Her eyes were large and fearless, her nose straight, her rather wide mouth smiled easily, and dimpled even while it precociously uttered the most outrageous theories.

Secretly, she admired Logan immensely. He was the only living man who had ever dared defy her. Even her own father didn't. She would have died rather than let him know, but she considered his exploit in picking a horse up in his arms as fully equal to anything Douglas Fairbanks had ever done. For that reason she suppressed her infantile complex by bullying him more than ever.

He began to play much better golf than he had under Gertrude's coaching. Sally

was not Gertrude's equal in a match, with-in several strokes; but she was more of a natural player, and when going at her best she occasionally made scores that her sister never had registered. She did not try to be technical with Logan, because whatever she did was instinctive rather than the result of study.

He unconsciously imitated her natural ease, and began to get down to somewhere near a hundred strokes for the eighteen holes. He added a mashie and putter to his iron, and decided not to bother with tennis. If he could learn to play decent golf, it would answer. Everybody played golf.

"Corinne told Gertie that if she ever married, her husband would be a man who could protect her," Sally casually remarked, as Logan teed up a second ball at the fifth hole, after driving his first one out of bounds.

"Well, that's perfectly natural, isn't it?"

"And Gert said yes, she just adored physical strength in a man. I told 'em to go get a couple of cops from the North End. They're all husky." She looked innocently at Logan; then, as if a new idea had struck her: "Or you'd do. Corinne says you can pull men's arms and legs off. Only you couldn't marry 'em both—not legally!"

Logan drove a second ball into the rough, and trudged away after it. Both Sally and he scorned caddies.

"Why don't you say *damn*?" She called after him. "I always do. Helps a lot!"

"If I don't say it over the way you dress, I'm not likely to over a lost ball," he retorted.

When he had gone, the girl grinned impishly. She tried to think of something that would make him really angry. It irritated her because he never lost his temper.

That night Logan went to a lecture on "The New Map of Europe," at Ford Hall. James Browne assured him it was necessary, though painful. He even made him remain for the questions which the audience was privileged to put after the lecture. It was midnight when he entered his lodgings and groped his way up the narrow stairs lighted only by an anemic gas-tip.

His room was in the front of the house, one flight up—a small chamber with a couch-cot. He never locked the door, as he had no valuables.

He found the latch in the gloom more by touch than sight, and swung the door in. As he stepped across the threshold, his foot slipped on the little worn rug which stood there, and he threw up an arm to recover his balance.

By this slight chance the plans of Tom Conner were upset. A thick-set young man who had been patiently waiting beside the door swung with practised skill a short, sausage-shaped affair looped to his wrist; and it fell viciously upon Logan's left shoulder, instead of his head.

Instantly all feeling passed from that arm, and he could not so much as crook a finger. He turned swiftly. The arc-light from the street showed him the bared teeth and glittering eyes of the man known as Ernest Emmons, who was even now closing the door with a deft side kick.

It flashed over Logan that he was very close indeed to death. One arm was useless, if not broken. The man before him was armed with one of the deadliest of weapons, and one that made no noise. Logan knew instinctively who had sent him. Not Judson Wayne—he didn't have the nerve. This was Conner's job, and Conner would pay enough to have it done right.

For the first time in his life he was actually frightened—not physically afraid, but aghast at the thought of losing his life just as it was becoming so full of interest. His thoughts were but the blinding perception of the second while the strange man was kicking the door shut; but in that flicker of time he saw himself lying dead in this room, while his murderer stole down-stairs and out into the dark.

His body would not be found till the landlady came to make up his room. "Body of unknown young man found in lodging-house." He could see it in the evening newspapers. Then identification, and himself shipped back to Hemlock, to be buried in Amos Berry's old family lot close by that accursed corn-field where he had hoed and sweated so many years.

That hurt worst of all! To break away—and within the month to be brought back, a captive for eternity!

The silent man turned. His hand—the one with the blackjack—lifted to strike again. What was it that Logan had warned himself never to permit?

Even as the hand rose, Logan leaped in, his own uninjured arm thrust out, his great fingers questing. They closed on the loose

vest of the other, and dragged him in. At the same time he swung on his heels.

The strong-arm man was lifted from the floor as if his hundred and eighty odd pounds no longer recognized the law of gravity. He was raised high in air, his arms flailing impotently. There was a mighty heave of desperate strength, and he shot across the room. He struck the one window fairly, taking glass and frame with him.

Logan heard him thud to the street below, heard his agonized yell. Then came running feet and hurried voices; a shrill whistle, and after a time rubber-shod wheels and a clanging bell.

He had turned up the gas-jet, and had just made up his mind that his shoulder was only stunned, not broken, since he could begin to use his fingers and bend his elbow, when the door opened violently. A uniformed policeman stood regarding him curiously.

"What's goin' on here?" he barked.

"Nothing. There was a man in my room when I came in, and he struck me—on the shoulder. Thought he'd broken it."

"So you pushed him out o' the window, hey?"

"No—I threw him out; but not purposely. We were over here by the door. When he hit me, I threw him away from me as hard as I could. He just happened to hit the window."

"Huh! You mean to tell me you threw him clean through the window with one hand, from here?"

"Yes, sir. He was in the act of striking me again, and he would probably have broken my head."

The officer scratched his own head, his eyes running over the orderly room.

"Know this bird?"

"I've met him in the hall once or twice—that's all."

The landlady spoke from the doorway.

"Sure, and he seemed such a quiet young man! Ernest Emmons—he wrote it down himself all proper like in my book."

"If his name is Ernest, mine's Lloyd George!" declared the patrolman. "He's the Chelsea Kid, with a record longer'n Pinckney Street. I'll take your name, feller." He turned back to Logan. "Don't worry! You done a swell job. His leg's busted in three places, and he's got a two-year suspended sentence hangin' over him!"

The landlady wanted to come in and hear all about it after the officer had left; but Logan gently shooed her away, and locked his door. His arm pained him a good deal, but he could move it freely now, and it was plain that he had suffered nothing worse than a bruise.

Fifteen minutes later he was dreaming that an elephant was sitting on his shoulder, and that for the first time in his life he had found something he could not lift.

When he awoke he was a little stiff, but otherwise all right. Getting into his clothes was a bit awkward—nothing more. He was going to play golf with Sally that afternoon. It would do his shoulder good to sweat it out in the sun.

He was wondering whether his landlady would charge up the smashed window to him, when he found an envelope on the table addressed to him, from Holyoke. He opened it idly. Within he found a single typed sheet and a smaller, oblong slip. He read the former outside, on the steps.

MY DEAR BERRY:

A thousand congratulations! Ten thousand, in fact—in the form of my check, enclosed herein. Greatly to my surprise, Wayne has capitulated.

I do not propose to lose track of any man who has the ability and persistence to get money out of that fellow. So, unless you have other plans afoot, if you will call on Whitelaw Jones, at my Boston office, he will put you to work at fifty per week. You're not worth it to the paper business yet, but I'm gambling you will be worth a whole lot more, before long, to

Yours admiringly,

WILLIAM ASHLEY.

After he had read the letter twice and scrutinized every detail of the check, to its intricate protective water-marking, a sense of loneliness began to steal over Logan, because there was nobody to share his triumph. Corinne, no doubt, knew all about it. Gertrude was interned. As for Sally, it did not even occur to him to confide in that impudent featherhead. He felt almost disappointed that Judson Wayne had given up so easily. It had been rather good fun, chasing him up!

He was a little detached that afternoon on the links. Sally twitted him about it.

"Nobody love you any more?" she giped.

Without intending to, he found himself relating the little affair of the night before.

"Didn't sleep very well," he finished. "Shoulder grumbled. It does now, a little."

They were sitting beside the water hazard at the fourteenth hole. Logan had just plopped two balls into the middle of the pond, and they were tossing pebbles to float them ashore.

"You certainly do treat 'em rough, Logan!" She sighed. "Gosh, I'd like to be able to do that to two or three people I know!"

He glanced at her perky little head bobbing at his shoulder as she picked at a small stone bedded in the turf. She had driven nonchalantly across the pond, and for the first time had failed to make caustic comment on his own topped shots. He felt grateful; and for some inscrutable reason, the feeling exasperated him.

"How many times have I told you not to wear your stockings that way?" he snapped.

He expected her to remind him that her habits of dress were none of his business; that he was a dead-head guest at a club where he couldn't get on the waiting-list; that even if he could, he'd never play golf unless they let him use a shovel; and other things that might occur to her as she warmed up to the subject.

Instead, she demurely studied her own knees.

"Don't you like them?" she cooed. "There's a dimple in each one. I don't see anything the matter with them."

She indicated them with a finger, glancing up at him from beneath her rather long lashes.

Logan's gorge rose, and suddenly boiled over. Sally had at last succeeded in making him really angry.

"Girl, you've never had any one who knew how to train you!" he said.

Drawing her to him with one arm, he began to roll up her woolen golf hose. To his surprise, she did not struggle at all. When he had finished by yanking her perky little skirt down, she cocked her head at him.

"Like 'em better that way?"

"Now I'm about it, I'm going to do a thorough job," he announced, rising to his feet.

He looked about. Far over on the tenth hole two old gentlemen were pottering about with their caddies. There was no one nearer.

He stooped and picked Sally up.

"What are you doing now?" she cried, beginning to wriggle and squirm.



"I'm going to take you down to the pond and wash the paint off your face!"

Then indeed he had a battle on his hands! She was as quick as a young monkey, and astonishingly strong. With his lame arm, he had all that he could do to hold the girl—without hurting her, that is. By the time he had hauled her to the water's edge, she had scratched and bitten his hands painfully; but he held her relentlessly, found a clean handkerchief, wet it, and vigorously scrubbed her face until every trace of rouge and powder was removed.

Suddenly she was quiet. He gazed curiously into her eyes; and then—to his intense astonishment—he found himself, with his arms about her, kissing her on the mouth, on her eyes, on her haughty little chin. And his kisses were returned!

In a second she was crying; and shame and remorse flooded him. He would not say that he was sorry, because he did not know how to lie.

"Forgive me, Sally! I don't know why I did it."

"Oh, it's all r-right!" she sobbed. "I'm only a kid. What can I do against a big stiff that can lift horses and cars, and pick grown men apart? I'm good enough to g-give your left-over kisses to, now Gertie and Corinne are gone—the big cats!"

He drew back in surprise, letting her free.

"Why, Sally, how foolish! I never dreamed of kissing them. Why, I—I never kissed a girl before in my life."

She looked straight at him, and believed what he said.

"Well, you take to it mighty handy, I must say!" She dried her tears with the back of one brown hand. "I s'pose we're engaged now," she remarked cheerfully.

"We are, if you'll let us be."

"And that means I've got to let my eyebrows grow," she sighed. "Oh, well, true love does not shrink from sacrifice! Here are your golf-balls. Now drop one, keep your eye on it, and see if you can't manage to clear this ninety-yard hazard for once."

On their ride home, nothing could have been more impersonal than their chatter.

Logan realized that he must see Sally's father and tell him what had happened. It was a great help to know that he carried a ten-thousand-dollar check in his pocket; but he would have faced the music just the same without it.

He had never chanced to meet Gordon Bean. He telephoned to the house after dinner, and was directed to a club. There, having impressed Bean that something more important than even bridge was on, he was at last face to face with Sally's parent.

"Ah! How do, Berry? Heard a lot about you—looking after Gertrude, and all that. Greatly indebted! You've been nice to little Sally, too. What can I do for you?"

"It's about Sally I came, sir. I want to marry her."

Gordon Bean's eyeglasses dropped the full length of their cord.

"God bless my soul!" he gasped.

The very idea of any sane being *wanting* Sally struck him almost speechless.

"But—why, she is a child! It's preposterous—only seventeen—"

"I'm not twenty yet," Logan interrupted; "and of course I don't think of marrying until I have a good start in life."

"Yes—to be sure. How much of a start have you, by the way? I don't really know you at all. Vouched for by the Ashleys, and all that, of course."

"I have twenty thousand dollars left to me, and I've just earned my first ten thousand dollars to-day."

"To-day? Ten thousand—do you gamble, young man?"

"No, sir—that was my fee for collecting thirty thousand that a Mr. Wayne owed Mr. Ashley."

"Wayne? Judson Wayne? Extraordinary! Any one who can collect money from him is a wonder. Berry, how did you manage to do it?"

"It's quite a long story, sir; but Mr. Ashley was satisfied, and has offered me a place here in his Boston office. And now, about Sally?"

"Oh, yes—to be sure. Sally. H-m! When did this happen? This afternoon, you say? Then there's very little doubt that she has changed her mind by now, or forgotten all about it."

"I don't think so. She has agreed to go back to school and wait for me. She's going to dress differently, too—let her hair grow, for one thing."

Gordon Bean gazed in astonishment at a man who ventured to think he could change the spots of his leopard child. And yet, why not? Love—even puppy love—wrought its daily miracles. There was a

certain quiet confidence in this young man's eyes; and if he could get money out of Judson Wayne, what couldn't he bring off? Moreover, Ashley didn't go about hiring men from sheer good nature.

Bean cleared his throat.

"As you say, Berry, it is time enough to think of marrying when you are twenty-one. I won't commit myself without consulting Mrs. Bean, but I'll say this much—if you can induce Sally to remain in the next school I pick out for one solid year, I won't interpose any objections to a formal engagement. Till then, no publicity, you understand—no ring or folderols like that."

"That is perfectly fair," said Logan, rising to go. "You can tell Sally yourself. She'll agree."

Bean did not in the least believe him, but Sally did. She departed one week later for a distant school, where her record had not been noised. Very demure and un-Sally-like she looked with her lengthened skirt and unpowdered nose.

Permission had been granted Logan to see her on her train at the North Terminal.

"Gertie was so surprised she forgot both her legs were in splints, and started to climb right out of bed," Sally told him, as, her trunk checked, they paced up and down the train-shed. "Wasn't it mean of mama to make me promise not to kiss you good-bye in public? I'll bet Gert put that in her head!"

"We'll make up for it when you come home for vacation," Logan sighed.

He wore a rather distinctive autumn suit, and many feminine eyes noted him, as Sally observed with satisfaction.

"You promised to give me your photo-

graph," Logan reminded her. "You already have mine."

She handed over a thin envelope.

"Not to be opened till my train is out of sight," she stipulated. "I'm afraid you will disapprove, but it's the only recent one I have. It shows me in my bathing-suit—a snap-shot."

"Of course I sha'n't mind! A bathing-suit is perfectly all right. It's only in other suits that you shouldn't—mustn't—"

"Show my knees," she finished. "Aren't you sorry that you won't see my poor little knees again for such a long, long time?"

Logan was almost relieved that the gates were thrown open at this moment. There followed a stowing away of herself and her belongings in the parlor coach, and such few tenderesses as could be exchanged in the bustle of departure of the Bar Harbor Special.

He could hardly realize it when the last car vanished over the trestles, and he was left standing on the platform. Slowly he opened the envelope, his eyes moistening in anticipation.

Suddenly he stiffened with surprise.

Looking out at him was a quaint figure clad in a long skirt, beneath which hung baggy bloomers gathered at the ankles. The sleeves of the waist came over the wrists, and a huge straw sunshade was caught under Sally's chin by a big ribbon. Only her face was visible; and even in the photograph, her eyes glinted with quiet mischief as she leaned negligently against a papier-mâché rock.

Beneath the grotesque figure were scrawled these words, in a childish hand:

Berry and Bean! Berry and Bean!  
When a man marries, his troubles begin!

THE END

### MARKETING IN THE MOON

LET'S go to market in the moon,  
And buy some dreams together!  
Slip on your little silver shoon,  
And don your cap and feather;  
No need of petticoat and stocking—  
No one up there will think it shocking.

Across the dew,  
Just I and you,  
With all the world behind us;  
Away from fools,  
Away from rules,  
Where nobody can find us!

Richard Leigh